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THE FOREIGN POLICY OF SIR EDWARD GREY 1906–1915

BY

GILBERT MURRAY

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1915

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OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON EDINBURGH GLASGOW NEW YORK
TORONTO MELBOURNE BOMBAY
HUMPHREY MILFORD M.A.
PUBLISHER TO THE UNIVERSITY

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INTRODUCTION

It is a characteristic of British politics that, even in times of crisis, there are always men to be found who will criticize severely their country's action and expound sympathetically the case for their country's enemies. I think we may well be proud of this characteristic. It is one that could only be found in a community which is highly civilized; whose heart is set on honourable dealing and not merely on success, and whose citizens in general trust one another and are free from panic. For these few who protest are not traitors, and no sensible person ever thinks they are. They may be right or wrong on the main issue; their motives may vary from the purest love of justice to divers degrees of prejudice or pigheadedness or personal pique. But they are never guilty, and never seriously suspected, of either treachery or corruption. No government ever persecutes them. No mob seriously maltreats them. They are unpopular, but nothing more. And certainly the present writer would be among the very last to judge any one harshly for being 'the friend of every country but his own'. He has too often been called that name himself, and has been proud of it. He is not going to blame any one for being 'pro-German' in the only sense in which the term can be fairly used; that is, of being anxious to state the case for Germany as clearly and fairly as possible, and to help us to understand our enemies. In the other sense, in the sense of wishing the Germans to win the war, there are, I believe, no pro-Germans among the sane inhabitants of Great Britain.

Yet, while there is no harm whatever, there is rather credit, in an Englishman trying hard to make his countrymen realize the case for Germany, nevertheless his state-

ment must of course be subjected to criticism just as much as a vehement pro-British statement. It does not follow that because a statement made by an Englishman is anti-British, it is necessarily either unprejudiced or true. Controversial feeling is strong. The pro-Germans are in a very small minority and have to fight hard. And many of them become naturally so wrapped up in their own immediate controversy that, as far as their combative feelings are concerned, the central enemy of the human race is Sir Edward Grey; next to him come the British Cabinet and the most popular generals. The Kaiser is to them a prisoner in the dock, a romantic unfortunate, to be defended against overwhelming odds. It needs great strength of mind for a member of a small fighting minority, like this, to be even moderately fair in controversy.

Let us take two plain instances. I will not deal with anonymous pamphlets, but will take two published by the Union of Democratic Control, and written by men of high character and quite exceptional brains, Mr. H. N. Brailsford and the Hon. Bertrand Russell.

To begin with the latter: most decently-informed people in almost every region of the world regard the German attack on Belgium as one of the obvious and important events leading up to the war. We may go farther and say that they mostly regard Germany's action with vivid indignation as an obvious international crime. The reasons for so regarding it are perhaps four. (1) It was an unprovoked aggression. Belgium had nothing to do with the war; she was an inoffensive outsider. (2) It was a breach of faith. Germany had pledged her word by treaty not to attack Belgium, and not to allow any other Power to do so. (3) It was treacherously prepared. Two days before the ultimatum, and again on the very morning of the ultimatum, the accredited German Minister at Brussels repeated this pledge to the Belgian Government. (4) It was carried out, according

to the reports of extremely weighty and impartial commissions, with circumstances of the most deliberate and devastating ferocity. Now what does Mr. Russell say about it ?

He first explains (p. 10) that ' a calculated naval scare and a General Election campaign ' in England, coupled with a continuous stream of attacks on Germany in newspapers, ' made men feel the Germans capable of any act of sudden brigandage or treacherous attack. Plain men '—i.e. simple persons deceived by this campaign of misrepresentation—' have seen a confirmation of these feelings in the violation of Belgium, though every student of strategy has known for many years past that this must be an inevitable part of the next Franco-German war, and although Sir Edward Grey expressly stated that if it did not occur he could still not promise neutrality.' Now I will not stay to point out that the first of these statements is inexact. The violation of Belgium was not ' known to be inevitable ' : it was only known to be a dangerous possibility, tempting to any Government which did not much value its reputation for good faith. The Reichstag did not know it was inevitable ; they had questioned their Foreign Secretary on the subject as late as April 28, 1914, and the Government spokesman had three times assured them : ' Belgian neutrality is provided for by international conventions, and Germany is determined to respect those conventions.' It cannot be maintained that ' everybody knew ' as a matter of course that the Government would do the opposite of what it said. The French Generals did not know it was inevitable ; or why did they draw up their line of defence facing the German frontier, not the Belgian, making provision at most for a German advance which might overflow into the valley of the Meuse ? The Belgian Government did not know it was inevitable, or why did they maintain to the very end their tragically correct attitude and refuse, till too late, the offered assistance of

five French Army Corps? But I will not stay to prove in detail that this first statement of Mr. Russell's is, at the very least, greatly exaggerated. Nor will I argue that the second is gravely misleading; that will be shown later. I will just ask Mr. Russell if this is the sort of language, or anything like the sort of language, he would have used if England had done what Germany did? Suppose our fleet had treacherously seized Antwerp, suppose a tenth part of the devastation and outrage which Belgium has suffered had been ordered by our officers and committed by our men? I feel sure that, in that case, Mr. Russell and I would have been standing on the same platforms; my language would probably be rather stronger than it is now, but Mr. Russell's would be utterly unrecognizable.

Similarly, in Mr. Brailsford's clever pamphlet, *The Origins of the Great War*, we have what purports to be a *résumé* of the diplomatic communications between the various countries. Now to my mind, and to that of most readers, the outstanding fact in those communications is the persistent effort of Sir Edward Grey for peace and its persistent evasion by Germany. Delay, conciliation, conference, mediation, by any method whatever that Germany might prefer: day by day and almost hour by hour the British Minister repeated his overtures, and Germany evaded or refused them all. It is conceivably possible that Germany may have had an excuse. It is possible that the obvious interpretation of the above facts may need to be corrected. But will it be believed that Mr. Brailsford never mentions the facts at all? Just imagine it! Suppose for a moment that Germany had six times suggested forms of conference or mediation or arbitration, and ended by offering to accept any proposal for peace that we might make, 'if we would only press the button', and we had refused! Would Mr. Brailsford have passed that fact over as not worth mentioning?

No; these writers are in their way high-minded, disinterested, courageous, and often very clever, but they are not at present in a state of mind which enables them to see or even to seek the truth. They are impassioned advocates, not fair-minded inquirers. They might one and all utter the famous plea of their ally, Mr. Shaw: 'Who am I that I should be just?' They begin, quite rightly, by looking for every mitigating circumstance which can be stated on behalf of Germany, and end, I fear, by searching with even greater zeal for anything that can be worked up into damaging Sir Edward Grey.

Now, for my own part, if the reader will excuse some egotism, I wish to make a personal explanation. I have never held a brief for Sir Edward Grey, and do not propose to do so now. It is generally difficult for an outsider to form a considered opinion on a complicated question of foreign affairs. It is doubly difficult if your own bias of character inclines you to differ from the persons who have most knowledge. But in me that bias of character has been strong, and has resulted in pretty definite political predilections. I have been unhappy about Morocco and Persia; profoundly unhappy about our strained relations with Germany; sympathetic in general towards the Radical and Socialist line on foreign policy; and always anxious to have the smallest Navy vote that a reasonable Government would permit.

I have never till this year seriously believed in the unalterably aggressive designs of Germany. I knew our own Jingoes, and recognized the existence of German Jingoes; but I believed that there, as here, the government was in the hands of the more wise and sober part of the nation. I have derided all scares, and loathed (as I still loathe) all scaremongers and breeders of hatred. I have believed (as I still believe) that many persons now in newspaper offices might be more profitably housed in lunatic asylums. And I also felt, with some impatience, that though, as an outsider, I could not tell

exactly what the Government ought to do, they surely could produce good relations between Great Britain and Germany if only they had the determination and the will.

And now I see that on a large part of this question—by no means the whole of it—I was wrong, and a large number of the people whom I honour most were wrong. One is vividly reminded of Lord Melbourne's famous dictum: 'All the sensible men were on one side, and all the d—d fools on the other. And, egad, Sir, the d—d fools were right!'

What made me change my mind was the action of the various Powers during the last ten days before the war. On July 26 or 27 I was asked to sign a declaration in favour of British neutrality in the case of a war arising between the Great Powers. I agreed without hesitation. I did not believe there would be a war; the nations were not governed by lunatics: but if by any dreadful blunder there should be war, I thought, let us by all means keep out of it. During the next week my confidence was staggered. The thing was incredible, but it looked as if Germany was deliberately refusing all roads to peace, as if she had made up her mind to have war. By the time the declaration was published—it took a week collecting signatures—my attitude had changed. For, if the war was not a mere blundering disaster, if it was a deliberate plot, a calculated policy of the strongest nation in Europe to win by bloodshed what she could not win by fair dealing, then it might be the duty of all law-abiding Powers to stand or fall together for the sake of public right. Then came more evidence: the White Book first, then the German Book, the Belgian, the French, the Russian, the Austrian. They all told fundamentally the same story. The statesman whom I had suspected as over-imperialist was doing everything humanly possible to preserve peace; the Power whose

good faith I had always championed was in part playing a game of the most unscrupulous bluff, in part meant murder from the beginning.

I said something of this sort to a Radical friend. 'Yes,' he said, 'for the last twelve days Grey has been working for peace, but for the last eight years he has been making peace impossible.'

Is this a true criticism? Or is it that we Radicals judged foreign policy in part wrong, inasmuch as we did not—or would not—make enough allowance for one great factor which affected it? If German policy and Grey's policy were such as we found them in July 1914, what had they been in earlier years?

We Radicals had always worked for peace, for conciliation, for mutual understanding. There we were right. We had argued steadily that no Power could gain and all Powers must lose by a European war. There we were right. But we had also felt a suspicion that Sir Edward Grey had persistently overrated German hostility and thereby caused it to grow. On this point were we perhaps wrong all through, almost as much wrong on our side as the common anti-German fanatic was wrong on the other? Let us try to consider this question.

The general story of the Twelve Days between July 23 and August 4 is well known, but I insert here, for clearness' sake, a brief diary of the time.[1] It is not intended to give a complete history of the proceedings, but only to illustrate the action taken by Sir Edward Grey. Those who wish for a complete and careful history, day by day, of the negotiations, should consult, first the

[1] In quoting documents I have sometimes shortened a long diplomatic phrase, saying 'Austria' instead of 'The Austro-Hungarian Government', and the like. I mention Foreign Secretaries by name: Grey, Sazonof, Von Jagow, Berchtold; other persons by their titles. The numerals in brackets refer to the British White Paper.

fundamental documents : *Collected Diplomatic Documents relating to the Outbreak of the European War*, price 1*s*., issued by the British Government ; next, such works as the *Chronicle* of July–August 1914 by William Archer (Oxford, 1915), or the *History of Twelve Days* by J. W. Headlam (Fisher Unwin, 1915, price 10*s*. 6*d*.). The anti-Grey version of the same events can be conveniently studied in Mr. Price's *Diplomatic History of the War* (Allen & Unwin, 7*s*. 6*d*.). This, the first book in the field, was naturally somewhat hurried and inaccurate, as well as, to my mind, a little morbid in its surmises.

A. THE TWELVE DAYS

1. DIARY OF THE TWELVE DAYS BEFORE THE WAR

July 20

London. Grey discusses with German Ambassador situation between Austria and Serbia. Grey assumes that Austria will publish her case against Serbia; Ambassador agrees. This will make it easier for Russia to counsel moderation in Belgrade. (1)

July 23

AUSTRIAN NOTE TO SERBIA

London. Grey, from account given by Austrian Ambassador of the Note, *greatly regrets presence of a time-limit.* May inflame opinion in Russia; may hurry things so as to prevent proper discussion and mediation. '*If war should occur between the four Great Powers, it would result in a complete collapse of European credit and industry; in the present great industrial States, this would produce a state of things worse than 1848, and, irrespective of who might be the victors, many things might be completely swept away.*' He hoped Austria and Russia would discuss together any points of difficulty that might arise. The Ambassador agrees, but dwells on bad conduct of Serbia. (3)

The substance of the Note, *handed in 6 p.m. July 23*: communicated to the Powers at various times on July 24, is as follows:

1. Serbia shall suppress all anti-Austrian publications.

2. Dissolve the Narodna Odbrana and all similar societies, confiscate their funds, and prevent their reforming.

3. Remove from public education in Serbia all teachers and teaching that are anti-Austrian.

4. Remove from military and civil service all officers and officials guilty of anti-Austrian propaganda ; Austria will name the persons.

5. Accept collaboration of Austrian representatives in the suppression of anti-Austrian propaganda.

6. Take judicial proceedings against accessories to the plot against the Archduke ; Austrian delegates will take part in the investigations.

7. Arrest Major Voija Tankositch and the individual named Milan Ciganovitch.

8. Prevent and punish the illegal traffic in arms and explosives.

9. Send to Austria explanations of all unjustifiable utterances of high Serbian officials, at home and abroad.

10. Notify without delay that the above measures are executed. *Reply before 6 p.m. on Saturday, July 25.* (4)

July 24

London. Grey, immediately on receipt of Note, expresses *great regret at the time limit,* and such a short one. *' I had never seen one State address to another independent State a document of so formidable a character.'* Some of the demands (No. 5, for instance) hardly consistent with maintenance of Serbia's independent sovereignty. (5)

St. Petersburg. Sazonof (Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs) meets English and French Ambassadors. Has just seen Note to Serbia ; reply demanded in forty-eight hours (of which seventeen had gone). Some of the demands impossible. The Note means war, and is

evidently backed by Germany. Hopes that Great Britain will stand solid with France and Russia. (France will stand with Russia in any case.) British Ambassador says he will refer this point to Grey, but does not think that Government will promise to stand solid. Advises (1) to try to get the time limit extended, so as to permit negotiations ; (2) to see how far Serbia can be induced to go in submission.

On renewed pressure by Russian and French Ambassadors, British Ambassador suggests that Grey ' might see his way to explaining clearly to the German and Austrian Governments that *an attack by Austria on Serbia would probably mean Russian intervention ; this will involve France and Germany, and it will then be difficult for Great Britain to stay out* '. (6)

[Grey, in answer, entirely approves of the Ambassador's language. (24)]

London and all Capitals. German Note explains that Germany considers the procedure and demands of Austria as ' equitable and moderate '. Germany desires ' the localization of the conflict ' ; any ' interference by another Power may be followed by incalculable consequences '. (9)

London. German Ambassador has urged Grey to use moderating influence on Russia. Grey says that, if Russia takes the view which any Power interested in Serbia will naturally take, he will be helpless, owing to the time limit and the terms of the ultimatum. *Best chance is that Germany, France, Italy, Great Britain should act together for peace both at Vienna and St. Petersburg.* Essential that Germany should join. (10)

German Ambassador says Austria may be expected to attack Serbia directly the time limit expires, unless Serbia accepts all terms unconditionally. Privately, he suggests that if Serbia will send a reply favourable on some points, Austria may perhaps be willing to delay action. (11)

Belgrade. Grey tells British Chargé d'Affaires, after consultation with Russian and French colleagues, to urge Serbia to yield as much as possible. (12, cf. 22)

St. Petersburg—Vienna. Russian Note urges removal of time limit, which leaves quite insufficient interval for the Powers to take steps to smooth away difficulties. Also, since Austria has declared her readiness to inform the Powers of the basis of her accusations, she should allow them time to study it. Then they could offer advice to Serbia. British Ambassador at Vienna is instructed to support this step. (13, 26)

July 25

St. Petersburg. Sazonof suggests that Serbia might simply withdraw her army, allow Austria to take Belgrade, and then appeal to the Powers for protection on the basis of the undertakings of 1908. *Russia is willing to stand aside and leave the question in the hands of England, France, Germany, and Italy.* British Ambassador begs Sazonof not to mobilize till Grey has had time to use influence for peace. Sazonof agrees, but urges that if Great Britain will take her stand firmly with Russia and France there will be no war.

British Ambassador answers that England can play the part of mediator at Berlin and Vienna better if she is not committed. (17)

Berlin. Von Jagow (Minister for Foreign Affairs) says Austria means to make war on Serbia, but he does not believe Russia will intervene, especially as Austria will agree not to annex Serbian territory. Adds privately that the Austrian Note leaves much to be desired as a diplomatic document; he had never seen it before publication. (18)

[It appears, however, that the Kaiser, the German Ambassador at Vienna (95), and also certain journalists had seen it.]

SERBIAN REPLY. (39; see above, 4)

The answers to the ten points may be summarized thus:

1. Yes; will suppress all anti-Austrian publications.

2. Yes; will suppress the Narodna Odbrana and similar societies.

3. Yes; will expel all anti-Austrian teachers and teaching as soon as evidence given.

4. Yes; will expel all anti-Austrian officers and officials, if Austria will furnish names and acts of guilty persons.

5. Yes; will accept collaboration of Austrian representatives in these proceedings, as far as consonant with principles of international law and criminal procedure and neighbourly relations.

6. Yes; will take the judicial proceedings; will also keep Austria informed; but cannot admit the participation of Austrians in the judicial investigations, as this would be a violation of the Constitution.

7. Yes; have arrested Tankositch; ordered arrest of Ciganovitch.

8. Yes; will suppress and punish traffic in arms and explosives.

9. Yes; will deal with the said high officials, if Austria will supply evidence.

10. Yes; will notify without delay.

If this answer not satisfactory, Serbia will abide by decision of the Hague Tribunal.

[This reply is entirely disregarded by Austria or treated as a blank refusal.]

VIENNA. Impression that Austria neither expects nor desires the acceptance of her terms by Serbia. (20; cf. 19)

BELGRADE. 6 P.M. AUSTRIAN EMBASSY DEPARTS: diplomatic relations between Austria and Serbia broken off. (23, 31) Serbian Government flies to Nish and MOBILIZES.

London. Austrian Ambassador tells Grey that, on expiry of time limit, Austria will immediately begin military preparations but not military operations. (25)

Grey tells German Ambassador: 'We shall soon be faced by mobilization of Austria and Russia. *Only chance of peace is for Germany, France, Italy, and Great Britain to keep together and join in asking Austria and Russia not to cross the frontier till we have time to try and arrange matters.* Participation of Germany essential. (25)

Grey '*hopes that the German Government will feel able to influence Austria to take a favourable view of the Serbian reply*' *as a basis for negotiations.* (27; This they refused, 34, but sent on his 'hopes' to Vienna.)

July 26

Vienna. Threatening language of German Ambassador. He is confident that Russia will keep quiet; to move would be 'too imprudent'. 'Serbia is going to receive a lesson.' 'As for Germany, she knows very well what she is about.' 'The Serbian concessions are all a sham.' (32)

AUSTRIA MOBILIZES AGAINST SERBIA

London. Grey proposes *Conference of Ambassadors of the Four Powers in London immediately,* if Austria and Russia will hold back in the meantime. (36; Italy, 49; France, 42, 51, 52, agree; Germany, 43, refuses.)

Berlin. The Kaiser returns this evening. The Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs argues that Russia will not act if Austria does not annex Serbian territory. (33)

July 27

Vienna. 'Country has gone wild with joy at prospect of war with Serbia.' British Ambassador, after discussion with other Ambassadors, concludes that Austria meant war from the first. (41)

BERLIN. *Von Jagow refuses to join in a conference of Four Powers* ; it would be too like a Court of Arbitration. He will ' await outcome of the exchange of views between Austria and Russia '. He added that Austria was partially mobilizing ; if Russia mobilized only in the south, Germany would not mobilize, but that ' Russian mobilization was so complicated that it might be difficult exactly to locate her mobilization. Germany would have to be very careful not to be taken by surprise '. (43) Nevertheless

LONDON. *German Ambassador tells Grey that his Government accepts in principle the idea of mediation by the Four Powers,* reserving, of course, its right to help Austria if attacked. (46)

Grey again presses that Serbian reply should be treated as a basis of discussion, and that German Government should urge this at Vienna. (46) [See 27, 34 ; they refuse.]

Grey to Austrian Ambassador : cannot understand how the Austrian Government can treat Serbia's reply as a refusal. It forms at least a basis of negotiations. ' *Austria seems to imagine that she can make war on Serbia without bringing Russia in ; if she can, well and good ; if not, consequences will be incalculable.* The Serbian reply was expected to diminish tension ; if Russia found that on the contrary there was increased tension, the situation would be increasingly serious. Great anxiety in Europe : for example, our fleet was to have dispersed to-day, but we have kept it mobilized. This is not a threat, but an illustration of our anxiety. It seemed to me that *the Serbian reply already involved the greatest humiliation to Serbia that I had ever seen a country undergo, and it was very disappointing to me that it was treated by Austria as a blank negative.*' (48)

ST. PETERSBURG. Sazonof has proposed friendly conversations with Austria on basis of Serbian reply, and will use influence to induce Serbia to do all possible to

satisfy Austrian demands. If the direct conversations are refused, or fail, *he is perfectly ready to stand aside and leave the whole matter in the hands of the Four Powers*—Germany, England, France, and Italy. (55, 78; Grey welcomes this proposal of direct conversations, 69.)

July 28

St. Petersburg. Sazonof sends note to London. From interviews with German Ambassador he gathers that Germany is, if anything, in favour of Austria's extreme demands. Has exercised no influence of moderating kind at Vienna. This attitude of German Government most alarming. Can England possibly influence German Government? The key to the situation is at Berlin. (54)

Paris. France understands that Great Britain cannot stand solid with France and Russia. Is informed that *Austria will respect integrity of Serbia but not her independence.* (59 but cf. 137.)

Berlin. British Ambassador suggests, and Grey agrees, that since German Government (46) accepts principle of mediation, we might *ask Germany to suggest the lines on which she would consent to work with us.* (68)

Vienna. In answer to Grey (46) the Austrian Foreign Minister, Berchtold, refuses any conversation on basis of Serbian reply; war is being declared to-day. (61, 62)

Rome. Italy suggests that perhaps Serbia would accept the whole of the Austrian demands if certain ambiguous and alarming phrases were explained. Italy will co-operate with Great Britain and Germany on any lines. (64)

AUSTRIA DECLARES WAR ON SERBIA (66)

Russia mobilizes in the South: informs Germany and explains that she has no aggressive intention towards Germany and is not recalling her Ambassador from Vienna. (70)

BERLIN. Night. *Chancellor refuses to co-operate in any way in a conference.* Austria's quarrel with Serbia a purely Austrian concern; Russia has nothing to do with it. Nevertheless, he strongly desires peace, and 'is doing his best at St. Petersburg and Vienna to get the two Governments to discuss the situation directly with each other in a friendly way'. (71) [This is denied by Russia and by our Ambassador at Vienna, who state that Germany is using no such influence. The influence, in any case, seems to have been extraordinarily timid (see 75, 76), and was neutralized by the German Ambassador at Vienna, acting with the war-party at home. This Ambassador desired war from the first. (95, 141) No evidence has ever been published to show that Germany tried to moderate the attitude of Austria, except one telegram sent from German sources to the *Westminster Gazette* of August 2, to influence English opinion. The German Government has not published any of the telegrams it addressed to Vienna.]

Austrian Ambassador at Berlin says a general war is most unlikely; *Russia neither wants, nor is in a position, to make war.* This opinion widely shared in Berlin. (71: contrast 85.)

VIENNA. Russian Ambassador reports that since Austria declines Russia's proposal for conversations, the only hope left is a conference of the Four 'less interested Powers' in London. Russia will gladly stand aside. (74)

JULY 29

BERLIN. Chancellor, in second interview, says it is now too late to consider Grey's suggestion that the Serbian reply might be a basis for discussion, but *he has gone so far as to suggest to Austria that, if she does not wish to annex Serbian territory, she might say so openly. He hoped from this that you will see he is doing his best.* (75; see on 71.)

BERLIN. Von Jagow says that any suggestion of advice to Austria will only lead her to precipitate matters and present an ' accomplished fact '. Troubled by reports of mobilization in Russia and something similar in France. Denies that Germany has begun any mobilizing (' but as a matter of fact it is true ', British Ambassador). (76)

LONDON. Grey sends grateful message to Chancellor for his kind language in (75). If he can induce Austria to abstain from collision with Russia, all Europe will be grateful to his Excellency. (77)

LONDON. Grey sees German Ambassador. Grey thinks best solution would be direct agreement between Austria and Russia, but hears that Austria has declined conversation with Russia. There remains principle of a Conference between the Four less interested Powers. *' If Germany will suggest any method to which she does not object—since mine is unacceptable—France, Italy, and Great Britain are ready to follow her.'* (84 ; cf. 92, 100 ; 111 below.)

BERLIN. Night. Chancellor, *having just returned from conclave with the Kaiser at Potsdam, speaks openly of war* and makes a bid for British neutrality. Will Britain promise to stand aside while France is beaten, if Germany agrees (1) not to annex French territory, and (2) to respect neutrality of Holland ? She cannot promise not to annex French colonies or to respect neutrality of Belgium. [This is the offer subsequently described by Mr. Asquith in the House of Commons as an ' Infamous Proposal '.] British Ambassador ' thinks it unlikely ' that Grey will agree. (85) [Grey indignantly refuses in 101.]

LONDON. Grey informs France and Germany clearly (1) that Great Britain cannot promise to intervene, (2) but will not necessarily stand aside. The German Ambassador ' must not be misled by the friendly tone of our conversations '. The German Ambassador understood this, and had expected it. (87, 89, 102)

He further explains to German Ambassador that if

the Four Powers are allowed time, they may bring about complete satisfaction for Austria, if only she will give them the opportunity. (90)

Says much the same to the Austrian Ambassador. As to the Austrian pledge not to annex territory, he points out that, without annexing any territory, Austria can make Serbia a sort of vassal State. Ambassador says that after all Serbia used to be regarded as in the Austrian sphere of influence. (91)

VIENNA. Public opinion very warlike. German Ambassador affects surprise that Russia 'should be so much interested in Serbia'. British Ambassador reports that unless mediation by the Four Powers, Germany included, is made rapidly, the situation is desperate. (94)

JULY 30

VIENNA. Berchtold says, to meet Russian mobilization in the south, AUSTRIA IS MOBILIZING COMPLETELY, but *he no longer objects to conversations* taking place between Sazonof and the Austrian Ambassador at St. Petersburg. (96)

ST. PETERSBURG. At 2 a.m. German Ambassador, suddenly discovering that Russia had been serious all along, completely breaks down, and *begs Sazonof to make an offer to Austria.* Sazonof offers 'if Austria will eliminate demands which violate sovereignty of Serbia, Russia will stop all military preparations'. News of secret military preparations in Germany. If this offer rejected, measures for GENERAL MOBILIZATION will proceed.

BERLIN. Von Jagow says (1) he has asked Austria if she will agree to accept mediation after she has occupied Belgrade, but has had no answer. (2) Is alarmed by accounts of Russian—and French—mobilization; Germany has not strictly mobilized yet, but soon must. (3) Has heard with regret, though not with surprise, the substance of 87, 89, 102. Thanks Grey for his frankness. (98)

LONDON. Grey refuses 'Infamous Proposal' (85). He adds that *the one way for Germany to preserve good relations with England is that they should continue to work together to preserve the peace of Europe* (i.e. as in the Balkan crisis). Further: 'If the Peace of Europe can be preserved and this crisis safely passed, my own endeavour will be to promote some arrangement to which Germany can be a party, by which she can be assured that no aggressive or hostile policy will be pursued against her or her allies by France, Russia, and ourselves, jointly or separately. I have desired this and worked for it, as far as I could, through the last Balkan crisis. . . . *The idea has hitherto been too Utopian to form the subject of definite proposals, but if this present crisis, so much more acute than any which Europe has gone through for generations, be safely passed, I am hopeful that the relief and reaction that will follow may make possible some more definite rapprochement between the Powers than has been possible hitherto.*' (101)

Grey amends Sazonof's proposed formula, suggesting 'the Powers will examine how Serbia can fully satisfy Austria without impairing Serbia's sovereign rights or independence'. (103; accepted by Russia and Austria, 120, 131, 132, 133.)

LONDON. French Ambassador reminds Grey of the conversations of French and British experts, and encloses evidence to show that German mobilization began on July 25. (105)

BERLIN. British Ambassador *presses German Government for an answer to Grey's appeal* (84) *to them to suggest some method by which the Four Powers could use their mediating influence.* They answer that they have not had time. They have, however, asked the Austrian Government what would satisfy them, but have had no answer. Chancellor says one must not 'press the button' too hard. (107; cf. 108.)

July 31

Berlin. British Ambassador reads to the Chancellor Grey's answer (101) to (85), refusing the proposal for neutrality, and suggesting that, if peace can be preserved, the Entente should be extended to include Germany. Chancellor says he is too busy to make a comment, and complains of Russian mobilization. (109, 108)

London. Grey suggests, in order to remove Russian mistrust of Austria, and Austrian mistrust of Serbia, that the Four Powers should undertake (1) that Serbia shall give Austria full satisfaction, provided she respects Serbian sovereignty and integrity ; and (2) that Austria shall respect the said sovereignty and integrity.

Further, '*if Germany will get any reasonable proposal put forward, which made it clear that Germany and Austria were striving to preserve European peace and that Russia and France would be unreasonable if they rejected it, I will support it at St. Petersburg and Paris, and go the length of saying that if Russia and France will not accept it I will have nothing to do with the consequences. Otherwise, if France is drawn in, we shall be drawn in.*' (111)

St. Petersburg. *Russia accepts with slight modifications the formula proposed by Grey in* (103). (120)

Vienna. *Austria accepts the same formula* (131). It is agreed that (1) Russia shall 'preserve her waiting attitude' ; (2) Austria shall advance no further in Serbia ; while (3) 'the Great Powers examine how Serbia can give satisfaction to Austria without impairing her sovereign rights or independence'. It is proposed that the discussions shall take place in London with the participation of the six Powers (132, 133, 135). Czar gives personal promise that while conversations continue no Russian shall cross the frontier. (120)

The conversations are recommenced on this basis (cf. 110) when

BERLIN. Von Jagow says he cannot answer Grey's appeal in 84 and 111, because GERMANY HAS JUST SENT AN ULTIMATUM TO RUSSIA, *requiring her to order demobilization within twelve hours.* (121)

LONDON. Grey explains to German Ambassador that the observation of the *Neutrality of Belgium* may be, if not a decisive, an important factor in determining our action. (119)

Sends formal request to France and Germany that they shall respect the neutrality of Belgium (114). (France says Yes (125); Germany refuses to answer (122). Also, inquires of Belgium if she is prepared to defend her neutrality (115). (Answer, Yes, and expects the Powers who signed the treaty to support her (128).)

AUGUST 1

LONDON. Grey sends for German Ambassador to warn him of great seriousness of German refusal to answer about Belgium. If Belgium violated, it may be difficult to restrain public opinion in England. Ambassador asks if Grey can in any way be induced to promise unconditional neutrality, e.g. supposing Germany agreed not to violate Belgium, not to annex French territory or even colonies? *Grey refuses to give any such promise.* (123)

BERLIN. In answer to Grey's appeal (131) to Germany to stay her hand and assist at the renewed conversations between Austria and Russia, von Jagow explains that the twelve hours are up, and *Germany is now at war with Russia.* (138; cf. 144.)

British steamers are detained in Hamburg. (130)

ST. PETERSBURG. Sazonof explains, with emotion, his efforts for peace. 'No suggestion held out to him has been refused.' (139)

[LONDON. On this day there is a misunderstanding between Grey and the German Ambassador. The latter says that Grey on the telephone asked him whether,

if France remained neutral, Germany would abstain from attacking France. The Kaiser, in telegram to King George, turns this into 'communication from your Government, in which *it offers French neutrality under guarantee of Great Britain*. He says it must be a guarantee by British army and navy. On this he will not indeed countermand mobilization on French frontier, but will not cross frontier. King George says there must be a misunderstanding; Grey was inquiring how actual hostilities between Germany and France might be avoided (if France promised not to cross the frontier) while possibility still remains of an agreement between Austria and Russia. Cf. White Paper 139, from St. Petersburg: 'I see no possibility of a general war being avoided unless the agreement of France and Germany can be obtained to keep their armies mobilized on their own sides of the frontier, as Russia has expressed her readiness to do, pending a last attempt to reach a settlement.' See German official *Aktenstücke* 5, pp. 44 ff.; *Collected Documents*, pp. 539–41.]

August 2

Von Jagow says that Russians have crossed the frontier (144). German troops occupy Luxemburg (146), Luxemburg protests to the Powers. (147)

Germany announces intention to march through Belgium, and, if opposed, to treat Belgium as an enemy. (153)

London. Grey assures French Ambassador (1) that, subject to approval of Parliament, British fleet will protect North Sea and Channel coasts of France, if attacked; (2) explains the doctrine of Lords Derby and Clarendon in 1867 about Luxemburg, that we cannot by ourselves take action in inland places, but can only support the action of others; where our fleet can reach, as in Belgium, we can act freely. (148)

August 3

France offers Belgium five Army Corps for the defence of her territory ; Belgium declines for the present. (151)

Italy, *considering that the war undertaken by Austria and the further war which may result from it have an aggressive object*, and consequently are in conflict with the character of the Triple Alliance, will remain neutral. (152)

The King of the Belgians makes ' a supreme appeal ' to Great Britain. (153)

August 4

Grey sends the King's appeal to British Ambassador at Berlin, and instructs him to ask for an assurance that Germany will not proceed with the demand made on Belgium. (153)

Grey assures Belgian Government that Great Britain is prepared to join France and Russia in offering common action to resist the use of force by Germany. (155)

Germans have invaded Belgium. (158)

Berlin. Von Jagow offers promise that Germany will not, at the end of the war, annex Belgian territory. (Cf. Austria on Serbia.) She is respecting the neutrality of Holland, which would be foolish if she meant to annex Belgium, since Belgium will not be profitable to her without parts of Holland. (157)

BRITISH ULTIMATUM TO GERMANY. Great Britain repeats her requests made last week (114) and again this morning (153) about the neutrality of Belgium, and expects ' a satisfactory answer by 12 o'clock to-night. Otherwise, His Majesty's Government feel bound to take all steps in their power to uphold the neutrality of Belgium and the observance of a treaty to which Germany is as much a party as ourselves '.

2. CRITICISMS ON THE TWELVE DAYS: OUR RELATION TO FRANCE

Now the above is a mere summary and may not tell its story clearly. But the complete record, as given at length in the official publications, instantly and definitely convinced me. I felt it quite impossible to doubt that Sir Edward Grey and all the English representatives were working well and hard and sincerely for peace. I have read it many times. I have tried to read it with the ingenuity of malice, interpreting every word and every omission in the worst possible sense. But even so I can make no plausible case against either the straightforwardness or the ability of the British representatives. I will even go further. Sometimes in considering a matter coolly afterwards, in the light of the known result, one can see that at some point a mistake was made which the people concerned in the action could not be expected to see. But in these negotiations I cannot find any such error.

Other people, I know, profess to find them. I will take some criticisms which I have read in pamphlets or heard from the lips of anti-governmental critics.

1. 'Though Grey professed to put forward proposals for peace he knew there was no danger of their being accepted. He had been acclaimed as the Peace-maker of Europe after the Balkan settlement; if he had again come forward as a preserver of the peace, especially if the successful negotiations had been held in London, it would have been a blow to the Kaiser's *amour propre*, such as he could not be expected to endure.' I should be ashamed to mention this curious criticism had I not found people who believed in it. If it were true it would be a condemnation of German action more contemptuous, if not more severe, than any I have heard; but it is not true.

The proposed conversations in London formed only one of many different proposals. Germany was again and again invited to make proposals of her own. For instance (84): 'I urged that the German Government should suggest any method by which the influence of the four Powers could be used together to prevent war between Austria and Russia. France agreed, Italy agreed. The whole idea of mediation or mediating influence was ready to be put into operation by any method that Germany could suggest if mine was not acceptable. In fact mediation was ready to come into operation by any method that Germany thought possible if only Germany would press the button in the interests of peace.' (Cf. 92, 100, 111.)

Thus it is quite untrue to suggest that the proposals for peace were put in a form which was calculated to injure Germany's *amour propre.*

2. 'If Grey had wished to prevent war, he would have said at the first that he stood unconditionally with Russia and France. Then Germany would have held back. But he would not say so; he was either feebly vacillating or deliberately treacherous.'

Let us take first the charge of vacillation. It is incorrect. Whether his policy here was right or wrong, it was from the beginning quite definite. He had no alliance with either France or Russia; his hands were free and he insisted on keeping them free. He consistently refused to commit himself to France or Russia in spite of repeated pressure from those Governments. There was no vacillation. (See 6, 17, 24 Russia; 99, 116, 119 France; cf. 148 after the Cabinet meeting. Cf. also the letter from President Poincaré to King George and the King's answer. *Collected Documents*, pp. 542–4.)

Now for the further point; was this policy right or wrong? It was surely the only policy possible. Does any critic really imagine that a Foreign Minister in a constitutional state like Great Britain has a right, off his own bat, without consulting Parliament, to commit the nation in

the way suggested? Suppose Grey had promised armed support to Russia and France, his promise bound no one but himself. He had not a united Cabinet, he had not even a majority of the Cabinet ready to give beforehand a pledge of unconditional armed support to France and Russia. And besides, he had, in my judgement very properly, pledged himself not to make any such large engagement without the consent of the House of Commons. He gave no pledge, and could give no pledge, till the whole situation was laid before Parliament on August 3 and the sense of Parliament was taken.

Thus the policy which Sir Edward Grey followed was the only one constitutionally possible. But it was also, as far as one can judge, the best. Remember, what Great Britain wanted was to preserve the peace of Europe, and tempers were rising on both sides. It was desirable above all to hold back Germany and Austria; but it was decidedly not desirable to over-encourage Russia and France. I do not mean that as a matter of fact the Governments of Russia and France wanted war; they did not. They both accepted every proposal for conference or mediation that was made. But both were exasperated. Many people in both nations were ready to utter the exclamation attributed to the Czar, 'We have stood this sort of thing for seven and a half years;' and the unconditional promise of Great Britain's armed support might have encouraged them to take a less reasonable line than they really took. It would also inevitably have destroyed any friendly influence which Great Britain might possess in Germany, by definitely ranging her on the side of Germany's enemies. (Cf. 17) The right line, it seems to me, was for us to make full use of our friendly but unallied relation to all Powers: to say to our closer friends, 'Remember, if there is war, we cannot promise to help you;' to say to the other party, with whom our relations were at the time friendly and had of late been improving, 'Remember, if there

is a war, we cannot promise to stay out ; we are keeping our fleet mobilized.' (47, 48 last paragraph, especially 87, 89.) This seems to me the ideally right line, and this is exactly the line Sir Edward Grey took.

3. ' Suppose the above argument is just, suppose that Grey's policy was simply and straightforwardly what it professed to be ; that is, he did not wish for war but he saw that he might be drawn in against his will ; why did he always refuse to state the conditions on which he was willing to stay out ? Germany made a bid for British neutrality, the so-called " infamous proposal " (85) ; it was considered unsatisfactory and refused (101, 109). Well and good. But later on the German Ambassador asked other questions : the first was whether Great Britain would promise to stand aside if Germany respected the neutrality of Belgium as France had promised to do ; the answer was No. That also was reasonable. Germany's promise to abide by her treaty obligations in one particular respect was clearly not sufficient ground to justify Great Britain in promising unconditional neutrality. (It was like saying : " If I do not rob the house I am now looking at, will you give me a certificate of character ? ") But the German Ambassador then asked a further question : Would Sir Edward Grey himself formulate conditions on which he could undertake to remain neutral ; and Sir Edward Grey refused to formulate any conditions. Did he not hereby put himself into exactly the same position as Germany herself when she first refused all the British proposals for conference or mediation and then further refused to make any proposals of her own ? '

This point needs careful examination.

In the first place we must observe that terms for the neutrality of Great Britain had been clearly and very broadly stated.[1] (89) Sir Edward had told the German

[1] It should also be observed that the German Ambassador, after asking Grey to name his terms for remaining neutral,

Ambassador that 'he did not wish to use any language that was like a threat or an attempt to apply pressure by saying that if things became worse we should intervene. There would be no question of our intervening if Germany was not involved, or even if France was not involved.' (Cf. 48, 101 above.)

But if Germany, from whatever motive, chose to use the Austro-Serbian dispute as an occasion for making war on France, then we must have our hands free. We could not tell Germany how much we would take to stand aside while France was crushed. We could not arrange with Germany for a limited crushing of France. Germany suggested various forms of limited crushing—much as Austria contemplated in the case of Serbia. No German fleet in the Channel; no direct annexation of French territory; the Ambassador personally—not the Government—suggested as possibilities no breach of the Belgian treaty, even no annexation of French colonies; but all such bargaining was both dishonourable and illusory and dangerous. Dishonourable, because it meant that, in the midst of France's close and loyal co-operation with us, we should make, behind her back, a private bargain that a stronger Power might bleed her almost—though not quite—to death, provided he paid us with his own friendship. Illusory, because there are other means, without annexation of territory, by which a nation can be systematically ruined or even reduced to a condition of political dependence. What else had Austria proposed to do to Serbia? It was dangerous, because the moment Sir Edward had consented to formulate or even discuss his terms for abandoning France, Germany could, without ever intending to accept the terms, have wrecked all our relations with France by simply publishing his letter.

'pressed him to say that the neutrality of Great Britain did not depend upon (Germany's) respecting Belgian neutrality'. (*Collected Documents*, p. 239 = *Livre Jaune*, 144.) Evidently he knew he could not offer this.

It is the old trick played by Bismarck on Benedetti. Benedetti, the French Ambassador, was induced to discuss with Bismarck a possible treaty between France and Germany which involved the annexation of Belgium by France . . . an ' infamous ' treaty, in fact. Benedetti never signed it, and says he never dreamed of signing it ; but he was induced to draft some clauses in his own handwriting. Bismarck professed to tear them up, but instead kept them till his time came and then published them. Imagine the effect on our allies if Germany could have published letters from the British Minister for Foreign Affairs discussing how much destruction and spoliation of France and Russia we would agree to and how much we would like to be paid for our complaisance !

The position of Great Britain was quite clear. We would do anything to preserve European peace. We would do our best to stand aside from any war arising in good faith between states whose definite interests were honestly involved. But as soon as we suspected that, by means of the Serbian quarrel, Germany intended to force a European war and to destroy France, we naturally refused to contemplate any bargain which would make either of those proceedings easy.

Thus, as far as an outsider can judge, it seems to me that at each point during the ten days before the war Sir Edward Grey's policy was exactly right. At least I can suggest no improvement, and I can see no validity whatever in the criticisms made by his British or German opponents. It is of course conceivable that by some extraordinary finesse, some dangerous bluff or cunning, a brilliant and unscrupulous minister might have prevented war. No one has suggested how, but such a possibility is doubtless conceivable. All that I can say there, is that I am thankful to have a Foreign Minister who does not aim at bluff or cunning, but who has established his great reputation in Europe because he is known to be disinterested and faithful to his word.

However, the problem of the Ten Days is only the first round in this discussion. It happens to be the one in which British policy shows at its very best ; and it happens to be the one about which we have by far the fullest information. It is rather a good symptom that where we know most we admire most.

But there are other criticisms, bearing on the action of the Twelve Days but really rooted in the previous history.

For example, there is the treatment of Belgian neutrality. 'We can understand', the critic may say, 'why the violation of Belgian neutrality was taken as the subject of our ultimatum. There were various reasons piling up one above the other, and cumulatively pushing Great Britain towards war, but Germany's action towards Belgium made, so to speak, the inevitable flash-point. It was the first definite breach of a treaty, the first crossing of a frontier, the first case where, if we still held back from war, we could be confronted with our own signature and our own broken word. It was the inevitable *casus belli*. But why had not Grey made Germany see this, definitely and unmistakably, years before ? For instance, why had he not raised the point when Germany first began building that network of railways on the Belgian frontier which had so clearly a strategical object ? '

This is a plausible objection, and one only sees the fallacy of it by trying to realize what sort of policy it really recommends. No one can say that the question of Belgian neutrality had been neglected or buried in silence. The treaties were on record, as well as the strong statements made about them by our Government ; and the German Government was repeatedly heckled about them by its own Social Democrats. But the policy here proposed is that Grey, at a time when our relations with Germany were delicate and he was particularly anxious not to offend her, should have said to

her: 'Why are you building so many railways close to the Belgian frontier? If you are building them with a view to breaking your treaty with us about Belgium, I must warn you that we shall treat that as a *casus belli*.' Would not such an inquiry have been in the first place useless, and in the second dangerously like the deliberate picking of a quarrel? At the best Germany's answer would have been: 'We build our own railways in our own territory exactly where we like and as we like; and we regard as not strictly pertinent your suggestion that we are likely to break our treaties while you keep yours.' At the worst, Germany might have taken serious offence, and public opinion in England would scarcely have been against her. It would have been far more strongly against the Minister who chose, at a time when we particularly wished for friendly relations, to fling upon the table this bone of discord. No; the step proposed is not one which a thoughtful diplomatist could have taken, unless he was prepared either to back up his declaration by war or to retire from it with an apology.

There is another strange theory, actually current still in a subterranean manner, that Sir Edward Grey had concluded a secret treaty of Alliance with France, and that he was thus unconditionally bound to support France in any collision with Germany. There is no evidence for this theory except Grey's refusal to formulate terms of neutrality. 'He could not do so, because he was secretly bound to France.' We have seen above that there were ample grounds for refusing to promise neutrality, without having recourse to any romantic hypothesis of this kind.

Secondly, the hypothesis is disproved by letter III, where Sir Edward Grey offers definitely to wash his hands of France and Russia and 'have nothing more to do with the consequences' if Germany will make 'any reasonable proposal', and they refuse to accept it. This letter could

not possibly have been written by one who was 'unconditionally bound' to France.

But also we happen to have had a full statement and discussion in the House of Commons of the exact relations in which we stood to France. They are certainly delicate; all the more so because they do not rest on documents. The obligations formed by a definite contract between two partners are generally fairly simple. The obligation that grows up between two men or two groups of men who have been loyal companions and faced dangers together is far more subtle and delicate, and that is the kind of obligation which has grown up between us and France. Let us consider the situation in detail.

When Sir Edward Grey addressed the House of Commons on August 3, 1914, he began by explaining that 'the House was free to decide what the British attitude should be'. The Government 'had no secret engagement which they should spring upon the House'. With France there was no Alliance, but there was what is technically called an *Entente* or Understanding; that is, practice of mutual confidence and consultation, and on certain issues a mutual promise of diplomatic, not military, support. It had been brought about, amid general approval, by Lord Lansdowne in 1904.

Now in 1906, the first year of the Campbell-Bannerman Government, there was a crisis in Morocco and a fear that Germany intended to force France into war. France asked us whether, if she were forced into war, Great Britain would give her armed support. Grey gave the proper constitutional answer that he would promise nothing; Great Britain could not go to war without the whole-hearted support of public opinion and of the House of Commons. He did, however, state his belief —and in order to be absolutely straightforward, stated it in the same words to both the French and German Ambassadors—that if, in consequence of the Anglo-French Treaty about Morocco, war should be forced on

France, public opinion in Great Britain would rally to the support of France. Meantime, the crisis passed. The conference of Algeciras took place, and war was averted.

The French Government then said: 'We understand you cannot promise in advance to give us armed support. Nevertheless, if you think it possible that a sudden crisis may arise in which public opinion in Great Britain would approve of giving it, surely we ought to consult one another about the form which it should take. You will not be able to give that support, even if you wish to give it, when the time comes, unless some conversations have already taken place between naval and military experts'. To this Sir Edward agreed, on the distinct understanding that nothing which passed between the military or naval experts should be taken as in any way binding either Government. The matter dropped for the moment because the crisis of 1906 passed away; but it rose again in 1912, when there was again a threatening situation between France and Germany. The question was discussed by the Cabinet, the conversations between experts were authorized, and the stipulation definitely recorded in a letter from Grey to the French Ambassador and an answering letter from the Ambassador to Grey. 'It was understood that such consultation does not restrict the freedom of either Government to decide in any future time whether or not to assist the other by armed force. . . . The disposition, for instance, of the French and British fleets respectively at the present moment' (i.e. the French in the Mediterranean and the British in the North Sea and Channel) 'is not based upon an engagement to co-operate in war' (Grey, in the House of Commons, August 3, 1914).

These conversations raise an exceedingly important question of policy. The argument in favour of them is quite clear, and so is the argument against. And they must be weighed one against the other. On the one hand,

if there was any likelihood at all that Great Britain might find herself involved in war by the side of France, and that suddenly, with no time for consultation and preparation, it seems absolutely necessary that the two War Offices and Admiralties should consult beforehand and form some kind of plan. Not to have done so would have been to go into the war blindfolded. As a matter of fact, it is to these discussions that we owe the successful organization of the British Expeditionary Force, the understanding between the two fleets, and the present safety of Paris. If there had been no conversations, the opening of this war would have been, as far as one can see, indescribably disastrous.

On the other hand, it may be objected that if the conversations themselves did not bind us, the results of the conversations did. They inevitably drew us closer to France. They were not officially binding. They were explicitly recognized by both sides as non-binding. But it must be admitted that, when the experts had consulted, and when Great Britain, after consultation with the French War Office, proceeded to make a scheme for the possible landing of an Expeditionary Force in France if ever it should be required; and when France, after consultation with the British Admiralty, proceeded to send all her fleet to the Mediterranean and leave her northern and western coasts unprotected, the two countries were a good deal more closely connected than before. It is quite incorrect to say that there was a 'secret engagement' and to suggest that Ministers who denied the existence of such an engagement were not speaking the truth. The conversations, which of course were 'secret', were not in any sense an engagement; and the facts which did, in a sense, constitute something like a moral engagement were not secret but patent to the world. The plan for an Expeditionary Force was openly discussed, and there was of course no attempt to conceal the position of either the French or the British fleet. But, without

engagements or treaties, the needs of the situation were insensibly drawing the two nations closer and closer.

I do not see that there is any case against Sir Edward Grey on the count of 'secret diplomacy'; but I do see a case for an opponent of the whole policy of 'ententes'. 'These ententes and special friendships', he might say, 'are a mere trap. You say they are not alliances; you say they commit you to nothing; you say you carefully limit yourself to arrangements for "diplomatic support" and make no commitments about war. But you are on a slippery slope. Every step you take is a move in the downward direction. Every crisis which the two nations face together, every plan they make, every conversation they hold, draws them nearer to the ultimate vortex, till you have France involved in war for the sake of Russia, and Great Britain for the sake of France and Belgium, in a quarrel in which none of them were originally concerned.'

And there for the present we must leave it. If the Entente was good policy, the conversations and the rearrangement of the fleets were good policy. If the Entente was wrong, so were the consequences of it. To discuss the policy of the Entente is to discuss the policy of the last eight years, and a little more.

B. THE EIGHT YEARS

1. THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF FOREIGN POLICY

To the eye of a thorough-going Liberal there is something sordid and even odious about the ordinary processes of Foreign Policy. There is a constant suspicion of intrigue, a constant assertion of ' interests ', a dangerous familiarity with thoughts of force or fraud, and a habit of using silken phrases as a cover for very brutal facts. In Home Politics you are working, in ideal at any rate, with a band of friends, bound to each other by the ties of common language and history, by neighbourhood and habits and common interests, or at least, where these fail, by the law and the knowledge in each man's mind that if he maltreats his neighbour he will be made to suffer for it. This ideal is of course not fully realized—far from it—but it is present as a groundwork. And normally all good Germans, all good Englishmen, all good Frenchmen, are in their Home Politics mainly working at redressing injustices, improving social conditions, helping the unfortunate, and generally strengthening or raising the standard of national life. But Foreign Politics are the relations between so many bands of outlaws. There are seldom any strong ties between the parties, either of language or history or neighbourhood or habits ; very often there are traditions of positive hostility and mutual dislike. But the cardinal trouble is that, in their relations to one another, the nations have no firm and definite law to control them, or at least no power capable of executing the law.

When I say 'outlaws', of course I do not mean criminals.

These outlaws are by nature just as honest and honourable as other men ; they make treaties with one another and mostly keep them, they pledge their word and generally abide by it. But if they do not, there is nobody to make them. If one wrongs his neighbour, there is generally no one but that neighbour to make him suffer for it ; if his neighbour wrongs him, he has no protection except his own knife and gun.

If we add to this absence of a common effective law the fact that each nation is normally sensitive only to its own public opinion and quite callous towards opinions expressed by foreign persons in foreign languages, and the further fact that to the average individual in each nation the serving of his country's national interests seems a devoted and unselfish ideal, in pursuit of which a little irregularity here and there may well be forgiven, we begin to understand the curious mental atmosphere, rather like of so many mediaeval barons under an absentee king, in which our international diplomats have to move. There is fear in the air, and it is fear that makes men lie. It also makes them polite. In old diplomatic records, and sometimes in modern ones, you will find such statements as the following : ' His Excellency received me with the utmost cordiality. He assured me that his Government had sent no letter to the Panjandrum and had never entertained the idea of sending any. As I had myself read the letter which his Excellency had sent, I thought it best to express the utmost gratification at his Excellency's assurance, and said that my Government had been guided by the same principles. I do not think he detected my knowledge or suspected that I had written to the Panjandrum first.' This sort of thing does not occur in Home Politics ; or, if it does, it brings a swift retribution. But in the diplomacy of some nations it would hardly be thought odd.

Now against this spirit of international intrigue there has been in the Western nations a constant protest, a

revolt of the human conscience and a constant effort after some better system. The protest is especially associated with the writers of the French Revolution, such as Condorcet, and the Liberal British statesmen of the nineteenth century. In its revolutionary form it appeals directly to the ideal of fraternity. 'All men are brethren; the division of nations is due to prejudice and convention; let us away with such false barriers and simply love one another and seek one another's good, irrespective of nationality.' In its more practical and constructive form it is, in Mr. Gladstone's words, 'the enthronement of the idea of Public Right as the governing idea of European politics.' That is, it is an attempt to bring the bands of outlaws under some general system of just dealing. We may or may not love the foreigner as a brother; but at any rate we will try to behave towards him with common honesty. These two conceptions are really complementary. As an inspiration in the background a man may feel the ultimate brotherhood of mankind; but meantime as a practical principle of Foreign Politics it will be a great thing if we can follow the rule of public right; that is, be true to our engagements, seek no unjust advantages, and settle our disputes by fair dealing, not by intrigue or force. These two ideals—like almost all ideals that have the truth in them—have found a very effective ally in ordinary experience and common sense. Practical people all over Europe have found, as a matter of fact, that international prejudices and jealousies are as a rule both silly and unprofitable; that in other things beside trade and finance the prosperity of any one nation generally involves the prosperity of its neighbours and its injury their injury. This is, for example, the basis of the principle of Free Trade in its relation to Foreign Policy.

Fraternity, public right, and common sense: the problem is how to practise them or even remember them when we enter this market-place of chaffering outlaws, each with a knife in his belt. It is not to be forgotten that we are

outlaws too; that we too carry knives; that we happen also to be remarkably rich and worth robbing. Our consciences may also remind us that our own past has some rough chapters in it, and that we were by no means always so respectable as we wish to be now. On the other hand it is pretty certain that, as we ourselves are trying to be honest and friendly, so are a good many of the others. Only you cannot be sure of them; you have to watch and be on your guard. You will beware of a smooth-spoken man who has been caught lying and making mischief. You will beware of a very big man with an extra large and effective knife, who looks hungry and seems inclined to pick quarrels.

There are various possible policies. You might, for instance, throw down your knife, and say publicly: 'Here is the proof that I wish to injure no one. If any one wishes to injure me I leave him to his conscience, and shall not resist.' This plan would be dangerous, and probably difficult to live up to in detail. Or you might say: 'I will instantly buy a larger knife still and do for that big brute before he expects it.' This plan would be doubly dangerous. For even if it succeeded you would soon find all your other neighbours banded against you. And meantime you would have been false to all your principles.

Or you might say: 'There is danger here. So I will set my affairs in order. I will try to settle by fair dealing all the disputes that I have with any one in this market. I will make friends with my neighbours and deal with them frankly. When I make a contract with any one I will take scrupulous care never to overreach him and never to fail him. I will not attempt to make myself richer by any sort of pilfering or plundering. Then, if I am forced to fight, I shall have friends to help me. And meantime I will keep my knife sharp.'

That seems a good and even a high-minded course. 'But after all,' some idealists will say, 'does it amount

to doing all that one can do? Could not one be more active for brotherhood and for public right? There are sure to be many objectionable things going on in that outlaws' market. Are you going meekly to acquiesce in them? Strong outlaws will be fleecing weaker ones, especially in the remote corners; some of the outlaws are said to oppress their servants and behave atrociously in their families. Even your own special friends have their vices, at least so the gossip of the market tells you. You are a rich strong person; you are armed. Why do you not interfere and put a stop to all wrongdoing whenever you see it? You have shown that you are disinterested; that is good. Now go a step further, and be a crusader for the right!'

Dangerous again! Suppose you tell some stranger or possible enemy to cease from his iniquities, or else you will make him, and then call upon your friends for help. Will they like it? They may be ready to support you if attacked; but will they do so if you go round the market picking quarrels, however honourable your motive? Suppose again that you feel your friend's home life to be reprehensible and tell him so uninvited? Are you sure it will make him behave better, or that he will continue to be friendly? And suppose that he returns you a contumacious answer, are you prepared to make him mend his ways by force? If so, there is an end to one of your friendships, and probably a new alliance among your enemies. And suppose, after all, that, as so often happens, the rumour of the market was wrong, and after denouncing some one for his domestic misconduct you turn out to have been misinformed? No. Unless you are very confident in your strength and your cause, and ready at any moment to fight for your life and fight alone, you will not be able to indulge this generous enthusiasm. You may indeed sometimes find a particular wrongdoer who happens to be comparatively weak and friendless: on him you can descend like an avenging angel. Yet even that

indulgence is apt to be more dangerous than it looks, as well as a little unworthy of a crusader. In the main you must be content only to punish those crimes and right those wrongs about which the conscience of the whole market is practically agreed, and for the rest to mind your own business. You will have, on the whole, to let the other outlaws do as they please with their own people, only occasionally and with tact indicating to your friends where your sympathies lie. You will have to allow cruel oppressions to go on in the regions outside your control, and be content to do your utmost to let Justice reign in your own house.

'Why not leave the market altogether?' some one may ask—'cease to chaffer and wrangle with these other brigands, and live a decent life with your own people in splendid isolation?' The trouble is that you cannot. You and the others are by now mixed up inextricably. Your cattle, do what you will, are sure sometimes to trespass on your neighbour's corn, and his on yours; you have to share the same stream for watering your respective meadows; your respective children and servants cannot be kept from constantly trading and occasionally quarrelling with one another. If you do not want to spend all your days fighting blood-feuds about trifles, you absolutely must come regularly to the market and talk things over and settle them by fair give and take. The dealings of the outlaws' market may be very far from perfect; they may constantly shock your aspirations after Brotherhood and often outrage your sense of Public Right, but, unless you wish to return to brigandage pure and simple, you must study the ways of the market and make the best of it.

We will not follow the parallel further. Of course it does not hold in every detail. Notably the reforming outlaw of our fancy was a free man, acting for himself. If he chose to risk his own life and throw away his own property, he was at liberty to do so. But a Foreign

Minister, even supposing he can be sure of the support of his Cabinet and his parliamentary majority, is never a perfectly free agent. He is always a trustee for his nation. His nation's interests and welfare are put in his hands, and he is no more at liberty either to speculate with them or be over-generous with them, than an honest lawyer with the property of his ward or a trade union secretary with the funds of his union. Men who have in their hands the property and interests of others must needs err a little on the side of caution. I will not say that they must never be trustful and generous and forgiving. An impulse of chivalry may be sometimes the highest wisdom. But they must remember that the possessions with which they are generous are not strictly their own. They are part of a great estate, with life behind it and before, of which they are only the transient administrators.

2. THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY SINCE 1906

Now let us consider the principles laid down by Sir Edward Grey as the guiding rules of his Foreign Policy. In general he is often supposed to represent the principle of Continuity in Foreign Policy, but this is not quite exact. In certain very large issues the Liberal Government of 1906 and onward agreed entirely with the policy of Lord Salisbury and Lord Lansdowne and therefore followed their action. On other issues it differed. For instance, it stopped indentured Chinese labour in the Transvaal and it granted immediate self-government to South Africa. But in Europe the policy has been mostly continuous. That is to say, the circumstances in Europe for the last eight or ten years have been such that almost all people who studied the subject at all were agreed as to the main line which British policy must take. Only

a very small number of Jingoes at one end and of Radicals at the other end took different views. The principles are conveniently stated in the House of Commons Debate on Foreign Policy on November 27, 1911.

1. ' In my opinion the wise policy for this country is to expand as little as possible.' ' The Rt. Hon. Gentleman pointed out quite truly that we do not desire to extend our Empire further. . . . I say without any hesitation that we do not desire accessions of territory, and in saying that I am not speaking for one small section of the House. I believe I am speaking for the nation at large.' The first sentence comes from Sir Edward Grey, the second from Mr. Bonar Law. Thus, the first principle of the present agreed and continuous Foreign Policy is that we seek no increase of territory.

This is made a little clearer in a later sentence of Sir Edward Grey's speech. ' If there are to be changes of territory brought about by goodwill and negotiation between other powers, then we are not an ambitious competing party. . . . And if it is the wise policy not to go in for great schemes of expansion ourselves, then I think it would be morally and diplomatically wrong to indulge in a dog-in-the-manger policy with regard to others.' In particular, he explains, if Germany wishes ' by friendly arrangements with other powers ' to extend her territories, we do not wish to stand in her way, or to claim ' compensations '.

The only limitation of this principle is an obvious one. There are certain places lying next to British possessions or perhaps strategically commanding important British routes which we ' could not see pass into other hands '.

This policy as a whole may displease some Empire-enthusiasts ; it will be accepted by all Liberals. The last limitation may possibly rouse suspicion in some minds, but not, I think, in the mind of any one who will really imagine himself in the position of a trustee responsible for the interests of the British Empire.

2. Yet, even without any expansion or aggression, an empire so large and vigorous as ours is apt to have points of friction where it comes in contact with other Powers. The next principle of British policy was to remove these points of friction and establish cordial relations with our neighbours. This was a policy which needed definite initiative and determination. The disputes were not likely to settle themselves. Sir Edward Grey came into office in 1906, and found his path both for good and evil prepared for him. On the one hand, there was the extreme unpopularity which Great Britain had acquired from the South African War and the excessive imperialism which accompanied it. The immediate and generous grant of self-government to the South African Union did a great deal to remedy this, but it remained a bad memory and a source of ill feeling. On the other hand, Sir Edward entered into the inheritance of a successful policy of conciliation and settlement, derived from Lord Salisbury and Lord Lansdowne.

Any one whose memory goes back to the eighties and nineties of last century will remember the frequent talk there was in those days of Russian scares and French 'pin-pricks'. We had been on the verge of war with France about the partition of Africa, about Fashoda, about Siam, and had serious friction about Egypt, about the Newfoundland fisheries, about Madagascar, and about the New Hebrides. This state of things was utterly unworthy as well as disastrous. It was brought to an end partly by the conciliatory policy of Lord Salisbury, and finally by a series of settlements in 1904 between Lord Lansdowne and M. Delcassé, the most important of which dealt with Morocco and Egypt. Since then our relations with France have been increasingly cordial, and such disputes as have occurred have been settled in a friendly manner and without difficulty.

With Russia our causes of quarrel were chiefly two. In the first place, Russia had always regarded herself—

it was a policy in which the whole emotion of the Russian people was involved—as the champion of the oppressed Christian populations of the Balkan Peninsula who were held down by the infidel Turk; and we had inherited from the times of the Crimean War the very repugnant policy of defending the Turk in order to check Russia. Secondly, Russia was steadily and inevitably advancing her borders in Central Asia: she had not yet reached the borders of British India, but she was threatening us from across the Pamirs, across Afghanistan, and across Persia. The first of these causes of quarrel was gradually removed as the normal sympathies of Great Britain were allowed to show themselves. Public feeling here was really in favour of the subject peoples and against the Turks; and Lord Salisbury, who had himself been a colleague of Beaconsfield in the Congress of Berlin and helped that statesman to back up Turkey, at last stated publicly that in the Balkans we 'had put our money on the wrong horse'. So that in this anxious field of politics the friction between Great Britain and Russia was largely removed. There remained the frontier question in Asia. To this Sir Edward Grey addressed himself.

The special point of difficulty was Persia. That decaying empire was in a state of habitual confusion and disorder. It was almost inevitable that its two powerful neighbours, Great Britain and Russia, should from time to time have to take rather violent action there to keep order or to protect travellers. It was quite likely that one or other of them might be led to interfere with the Persian Government. And meantime each was intriguing hard to prevent the other from advancing its boundaries and each suspecting the other of worse intrigues still. It was this mutual suspicion and intrigue that Grey set himself with all his vigour to dissipate. Various frontier arrangements were made in 1907 and later, keeping in view two principles. First, the territories of the two Great Powers were, as far as possible, to be kept well

separated. Secondly, there should be from henceforth no more intrigue, and no cause for suspicion. As far as Grey could make it so, the relation between the two neighbour Powers was to be frank and loyal, based indeed on a treaty but continued as a habit of free consultation and mutual confidence.

As far as the relations of Great Britain with France and Russia are concerned, these treaties, if they at all attain their object, are evidently, beyond dispute, an enormous and almost unmixed blessing. The objections to them from other points of view will be treated later.

But meantime what about our relations with other Powers? The effort towards peace and goodwill was, I think, generally operative. During the nineties we had frequent disputes with the United States and once, in 1895, about the boundaries of Venezuela, we drifted carelessly almost to the brink of war. But the same policy was pursued here also. It was built up largely by the efforts of Lord Pauncefote, a diplomatist of the old school, whose services to the cause of peace and arbitration should not be forgotten; and it culminated in the historic appointment of James Bryce as Ambassador at Washington and his extraordinary success in winning the confidence and affection of the American people. Our relations with the United States are always intimate, but they have never before been so friendly as during the presidencies of Mr. Roosevelt, Mr. Taft, and Mr. Wilson.

With Italy our relations were always cordial, but they have on the whole improved; they were good enough to stand the strain of the war in Tripoli, and have now ripened into an alliance. With the smaller European Powers we had no quarrel; where opportunity offered we have shown them goodwill, and have concluded friendly treaties with most of them.

And what of Germany?

The answer is quite clear. Count Reventlow in his great history of German Foreign Policy admits that up

to about 1892 England had maintained the friendliest attitude to Germany and given her no cause for irritation. In 1879, when the beginnings of the Triple Alliance were formed, Lord Salisbury went out of his way to say that 'a crowning mercy had been vouchsafed to the world'. When Germany was setting forth on her colonial programme in 1884, Mr. Gladstone said: 'If Germany is to become a colonizing Power, all I can say is, God speed her! She becomes our ally and partner in the execution of the great purposes of Providence for the advantage of mankind.' Mr. Chamberlain added, 'If foreign nations are determined to pursue distant colonial enterprises we have no right to prevent them.' Almost exactly the same words as were used by Sir Edward Grey in 1911; but the relations between the two Powers had greatly changed in the meantime. We shall consider later exactly what caused the change.

But first we will examine the two *Ententes* more in detail.

3. THE ENTENTE WITH FRANCE: THE MOROCCO TREATY OF 1904

The Treaty of 1904 with France settled our respective positions in Egypt and in Morocco.

In Egypt France and Great Britain had in the last century equally great interests. When Arabi Pasha rebelled against the Khedive in 1882, Mr. Gladstone, rightly or wrongly, with much reluctance and amid much well-grounded criticism from his own party, decided that we were bound by treaty to protect the Khedive against rebellion. We invited the French to act with us, but they declined. We suppressed Arabi and then found it harder to evacuate Egypt than we had imagined. The Government was not yet secure. Lord Salisbury agreed with Mr. Gladstone that we ought to evacuate as soon as

it was safe to do so. In 1887 we arranged terms of evacuation with Turkey, but France induced the Sultan not to sign the treaty. Meantime our responsibilities in Egypt increased instead of diminishing. The defence of the country against the predatory Dervishes of the Sudan led us into further military expeditions. The needs of the Civil Government gradually called into being a skilled civil service, more or less on the Indian model; and the long administration of Lord Cromer, though naturally opposed by the Nationalists and open to criticism in detail, improved the economic condition of the country out of all recognition. The story of Egypt, however, lies outside our present subject. What concerns us is that all through this process France was increasingly irritated against Great Britain. She suspected that we intended the annexation of a country which had once almost been hers; she was naturally jealous of our control over the Suez Canal, which was her creation; she saw her ambitions on the Upper Nile abruptly thwarted by our control of the Sudan. Consequently she made a practice of harassing us whenever opportunity offered, and opportunities did offer in every corner of the world.

By the Treaty of 1904 this state of friction was set at rest. Great Britain declared that she 'had no intention of altering the political status of Egypt'. France in return 'declared that she would not obstruct the action of Great Britain in that country' in any manner. The other Powers were informed of the treaty and made corresponding declarations.

In return we made a similar agreement with France about Morocco. France had long been established in Algeria, and had founded there a most successful and prosperous colony. All along the western frontier of Algeria, reaching down to the desert, lay this desperately ill-governed and turbulent Empire of Morocco. (I remember as an undergraduate attending a lecture on

Moroccan atrocities ; the then Shereef, it was stated, had marched a regiment of soldiers, in chains and without food or water, into the desert till they died.) This geographical position made France the natural Power to exercise any police-work that was necessary in Morocco, and also made it highly undesirable that another Great Power should establish itself in that country, threatening Algeria in the flank. On the other hand, the Republican Government were determined not to embark, if they could help it, on any attempt to conquer or annex Morocco, a project which would have been both expensive and dangerous.[1] So far all seemed plain ; but the question of the north coast presented some special difficulties. It lay opposite Gibraltar and was strategically important for the control of the Straits. Great Britain could not well agree to having a strong naval Power, like France, established there. Besides, there was Spain to be remembered, and Spain had always considered that line of coast to be in her own sphere of influence.

In the agreement of 1904 the French Government ' declare that they have no intention of altering the political status of Morocco '. The British Government ' recognize that it appertains to France more particularly, as a Power whose dominions are conterminous for a great distance with those of Morocco, to preserve order in that country and to provide assistance ' for all the reforms it may require.

' They will not obstruct the action taken by France for this purpose provided that the existing rights of Great Britain '—these rights were chiefly concerned with the coasting trade—are left intact. The commerce of all

[1] The French Chamber passed repeated resolutions in favour of abiding by the Act of Algeciras and against a ' forward policy ' in Morocco. Mr. E. D. Morel gives the following dates of such resolutions: 1906, Dec. 6 ; 1907, Nov. 12 ; 1908, Jan. 24, Jan. 28, June 19, Dec. 23 ; 1909, Jan. 10, Nov. 23 ; 1911, March 24. (*Ten Years of Secret Diplomacy*, p. 102 (ed. 1915).)

nations was to receive identical treatment—guaranteed for thirty years; and the two Powers promised one another 'diplomatic support in order to obtain the execution of the clauses of the declaration'.

Now this treaty, as far as it goes, meets with almost universal approval. It may be that France gained more than England; but since both gained, and on the whole the world gained, there is not much harm in that. It may be that the trade equality should have been guaranteed for ever instead of thirty years. But such points are trifles.

Far more serious objection is taken to the fact that this public treaty was accompanied by a secret treaty. This single secret treaty, not made by Sir Edward Grey but by his predecessor, has been made the foundation for a wide national outcry and, in my judgement, for the most hysterical suspicions. What was the secret treaty, and why was it made?

It was made for this reason. When civilized Powers are dealing with a Power which is uncivilized, misgoverned, torn by disorder and rebellion, and very nearly bankrupt, all history shows that it may be impossible, even with the best will in the world, to preserve the independence of that Power. Read the history of the State of Oudh or even Bokhara; or consider the infinite trouble which Great Britain and other Powers have had to maintain—against the public interest—the integrity of Turkey in Europe. And Turkey is, of course, vastly stronger and less chaotic than Morocco. In this case France had declared her wish and intention to maintain the 'political status' of Morocco. But suppose it proved impossible to do so? Suppose the Government finally collapsed. Great Britain naturally wanted to know what France proposed to do in that case, especially since we objected to her annexing the north coast. France therefore promised us that, if ever she 'found herself constrained by force of circumstances' to intervene more drastically

in Morocco, she would not establish a protectorate over that strip of north coast, but would allow it to come into the sphere of influence of Spain. A condition was attached that Spain should generally accept the other conditions of the Anglo-French agreement and undertake not to pass the territory in question on to another Power. A separate treaty to this effect was made between France and Spain.

It will be observed that this secret treaty, which is made such a central indictment against Sir Edward Grey, was not made by him, but by the Conservative Government of 1904. But, apart from that, is it honestly possible to complain of its secrecy?

Of course, there are always objections to secrecy, but in the present case it is hard to see what else was possible. There were only three courses open: a secret treaty, a public treaty, or no treaty at all. I think, on the whole, the first of these was the least bad. A public treaty would have been the end of Morocco. You cannot successfully maintain the 'credit and integrity' of an empire when you have published to the world the arrangements you have made in case it proves too hopelessly incompetent to go on existing. And to make no treaty at all would have left in action all those causes of friction which the two Governments were trying to remove. We should never have known whether the French were not arranging to annex the north coast, or making some dangerous deal about it. We should have known that the dissolution of Morocco was always imminent, and that, if it occurred, our treaty with France would cease to hold. We should have been back in the full swing of mutual suspicion and intrigue. No: with all the undoubted objections to 'secret diplomacy' in general, I do not see how any Government could have avoided this particular secret treaty.

But besides the secrecy, there are other criticisms passed upon the agreement of 1904; some of them are valid and some not.

There is a suggestion that the secret treaty was inconsistent with the public one, and showed the dishonest intentions of the two Powers. This suspicion seems to me quite gratuitous. We need not for a moment dispute the charge that there were plenty of dishonest people in France and elsewhere, who simply wanted to make money out of Morocco, and were ready to push their Governments towards any discreditable adventure which might lead to that object. Of course there were, and are, and, as far as one can see, always will be such people. And I fear we must admit that, even in the best-conducted nations, they do sometimes influence Governments and deflect the course of public policy. Neither the treaties themselves nor any incidents in the subsequent ten years seem to me to indicate any dishonesty in the French Government ; but in any case, the doings of the French Government are not our immediate business. Our business is with the British Government ; and it does not here come under suspicion. It has never intervened in Morocco.

Next there is the criticism that a treaty of this kind could not properly or safely be made without consultation with Germany. This was pointed out by Lord Rosebery, I believe, at the time, and seems to me a just criticism. It does not touch Sir Edward Grey. It hardly even touches Lord Lansdowne, who seems to have laid the agreement about Egypt quite correctly before all the Powers and obtained their approval. It was for France to communicate the Morocco Treaty, since she was the interested Power. And it seems that M. Delcassé did not formally do so. He told the German Ambassador, Prince Radolin, about the treaty beforehand ; that is on record. And Radolin duly informed the Chancellor. They both agreed that, as far as they understood the terms of the treaty, it did not injure German interests, and they gave it their general approval. But for some reason M. Delcassé did not formally communicate the

treaty to the German Government. He may have felt a difficulty about the secret clauses. Again, it appears that he objected strongly to the idea that France must submit her important acts of foreign policy to Germany for approval, except in matters where Germany was directly concerned. Here he was doubtless right; the claim which Germany afterwards made, 'that no treaty should be made in any part of the world without the approval of Germany, was not one which a self-respecting nation could admit. But in the case of Morocco Germany had some solid interests involved. She was not nearly so much interested as the other three Powers; she had no conterminous frontier, like France, no neighbouring frontier, like Spain: she had no strategical interest at stake, like Spain and England; and not half nor a third the amount of Moroccan trade that England had. Still, she had some commercial interests; and the advanced Colonial Party in Germany had indulged in dreams of making Morocco a German possession. It would have been more polite to consult Germany.

There is another objection which, I fully agree, ought not to be overlooked. It raises a large question of principle. When Mr. Dillon, in the historic debate of November 27, 1911, remarked upon the fact that in all the controversy about the Moroccan Treaty 'it does not seem to have occurred to any one that the people of Morocco have any say in the matter at all', certain members of the House laughed and cried 'Hear, hear'. Yet it is certainly not a thing to laugh at or to take for granted, that, as Mr. Dillon proceeded to say, the future of a country should be settled by treaty between two foreign Powers, and that settlement defended at length without 'one sentence to indicate the smallest sympathy with the people to whom that country belonged'.

There is a tragedy here, a tragedy which underlies the relations between civilized and uncivilized nations throughout the globe. The history of almost every

European colony shows it in some degree. Civilized man at his best can do great things for uncivilized man, especially perhaps if the difference between them is so great that the inferior does not seek to dispute it. But what the more backward nations very often receive is civilized man at his worst. And probably some of the direst crimes and cruelties that have been perpetrated in the world have occurred in those regions where white adventurers and speculators have been allowed to establish their supremacy over coloured races without the constant control of the Home Government.

The spirit of Mr. Dillon's criticism is therefore very important, though its exact form was perhaps hardly fair. Sir Edward Grey was dealing with the Morocco Question in so far as it affected our relations with foreign Powers, especially Germany. A plebiscite of the inhabitants of Morocco had not been suggested as a possibility by any critic; and since the policy of the British Government was simply to 'disinterest itself' in Morocco, it could not possibly be accused of maltreating the Moors.

Neither will any reasonable person argue that Great Britain, herself the greatest colonizing Power in the world, should object on principle to France or any other Power making colonies. The establishment of most colonies is a history written in blood, and largely in innocent blood. Yet surely none but a paradox-monger will maintain that Australia ought to have been left to the Blackfellows, or North and South America to the Indian tribes? All that we can demand of the British Government is that within its own possessions it shall do its utmost to maintain the welfare of its own subject-races and vigilantly prevent their oppression. This is a difficult work, and we have sometimes failed in it. But, on the whole, judged by ordinary human standards, and compared with colonial or foreign Governments, the Home Government's record in this matter is admittedly good.

4. THE SEQUEL OF THE MOROCCO TREATY

The one error which we have recognized in the Morocco Treaty was productive of trouble. At first the coast seemed clear. France, assured of Great Britain's diplomatic support, and of the general approval of the other Powers, proceeded to the task of inducing Morocco to reform herself. A scheme of reforms was pressed upon the Shereef. Perhaps it was rather too much concerned with French interests and monopolies, but on the whole it was a comprehensive and excellent scheme, reminding one of the numerous programmes of the same sort which have been pressed so vainly on the Sultan of Turkey. The Shereef procrastinated, the pressure continued, when suddenly, on March 31, 1905, the German Emperor in person descended in his private yacht on the port of Tangier, and made a speech to the world at large. He announced that he regarded the Shereef as a free and independent sovereign, not bound to obey any foreign pressure; that sudden and sweeping reforms were undesirable in Morocco; and that German interests must be safeguarded. This speech was followed by a demand for a general European conference to settle the affairs of Morocco.

This action was diplomatically astonishing. Its suddenness, its rudeness, its direct defiance of France in a sphere where Germany had previously admitted the rights of France to be paramount, produced naturally a great excitement. The excitement was deepened by the surrounding situation. What had changed in the state of Europe between the time when Germany was friendly or indifferent about Morocco and the time when she suddenly burst into threats? The answer was unfortunately plain. France's one ally, Russia, had been heavily defeated by Japan, and was powerless for the moment in Europe. France was alone, and Germany had her at a disadvantage.

On the other hand, whatever we may think of Germany's

methods and motives, she had a case. France had made an arrangement about Morocco with her two neighbours alone, Great Britain and Spain. It was quite a good arrangement, but the future of Morocco was a matter of public interest, and the rest of Europe had the right to be consulted. The end, as it happened, seemed exactly to satisfy the demands of justice. Germany carried her proposal for a European conference; representatives of the Powers met at Algeciras in January 1906; but when they met they decided almost all points in favour of France and against Germany.

But meantime, what was the attitude of Great Britain? We were bound by treaty to give 'diplomatic support' to France in the policy which resulted from our Moroccan treaty. We gave it. It is hard to see how we could have done otherwise. True, France's case was not perfect: if we had been absolutely disinterested arbitrators in the matter, we should probably have decided that France ought to agree to a conference. That, as a matter of fact, is what the French Government eventually agreed to do; but at first M. Delcassé, the French Foreign Minister, refused to do anything of the kind. There was a sharp collision. Germany was wrong on most of the matters at issue, and violently wrong in her method of raising the question; but she was justified in asking for a conference. France, to whom we had promised our diplomatic support, seemed, in her indignation at being bullied, to be inclined to refuse a conference. And we took our stand firmly at her side.

It would be interesting to know what our representatives said in private to our friend's representatives. It is likely enough that there were private warnings and appeals for moderation. But in public at any rate Great Britain stood with perfect loyalty by the side of France. Here no doubt we strike upon one of Sir Edward Grey's cardinal principles: if you make an engagement, carry out your engagement loyally and with no hedging.

Here a shrewd objection is raised. It may be said: 'Then, do you mean to say that, if France had not yielded, it would have been right for Great Britain to go to war with Germany for the sake of France on the question whether there should or should not be a conference, Germany being on that point right and France wrong?'

The answer to that question is important.

In the first place, it is mere folly to suppose that as soon as two Powers definitely come to a disagreement, the immediate result is war. As Mr. Gladstone used to point out, between the disagreement and the appeal to arms there are interposed 'the whole resources of diplomacy'. Unfortunately, as Sir Edward Grey has said: 'There are some people who seem to take delight in suggesting, or in forming the opinion, from whatever gossip or information they can get in any quarter, that we are near to war; and the nearer we come to war, the greater satisfaction they seem to get out of it. . . . It is really as if in the atmosphere of the world there was some mischievous influence at work . . . as if the world were indulging in a fit of political alcoholism; and the best that can be done by those of us who are in positions of responsibility is to keep cool and sober.' If there had been a deadlock on a point of etiquette like this, the next step would have been for some third Power to have suggested a way out or offered mediation. Half a dozen ways out could be thought of. It is only in the event of one Power rejecting all proposals and refusing to make any of her own that war would have come into the range of immediate politics. And in that case it would not have been because of the Conference question, but because one of the Powers concerned deliberately wished for war. I need hardly add that Great Britain would never have been that Power.

As a matter of fact the French Government agreed to the summoning of a conference. M. Delcassé resigned, and the crisis passed. The Conference met at Algeciras,

close to Gibraltar, early in 1906, and drew up an Act 'based upon the threefold principle of the sovereignty and independence of his Majesty the Sultan of Morocco, the integrity of his dominions, and economic liberty' for all commerce. On nearly all the disputed points the majority of the Powers voted with France. Not only Great Britain and Russia, but Germany's ally, Italy, admitted the claim of France to 'special political interests' as against the German claim of equality for all; and even Austria did not always follow Germany.

5. THE CRISIS OF 1911

The fatal weakness of the Act of Algeciras lay in the unreality of the principle on which it was based. At the very time while the Conference was sitting the young Sultan, Abdul-Aziz, was plunging deeper into foreign debt and insolvency. In the spring of 1907 a French doctor was murdered at Marrakesh and the French, reluctant to make an expedition into the heart of the country, yet unwilling to ignore the murder entirely, proceeded to occupy the small town of Udja, just across the Algerian border. The brigand Raisuli was active near Tangier, and in June succeeded in capturing Kaid Sir H. Maclean, Instructor to the Moorish Army, for whose ransom the British Government had to pay £20,000. In July there were still more serious outbreaks at Casablanca, on the Atlantic coast. Certain works for improving the harbour, conducted by a French company with the approval of the Sultan, came near the old Moslem Cemetery, and reports were spread among the neighbouring tribesmen that the infidels were desecrating their fathers' graves. The tribesmen attacked the European navvies, killed nine of them, and then—by a course of reasoning with which every student of human folly is familiar—proceeded to raid the Jewish quarter of the town. The French

decided to occupy Casablanca ; they were opposed and heavy fighting ensued. The dead were numbered by thousands and it took a year's warfare before General Amadé had reduced the district to order. These deplorable events led to others. Tribe after tribe in the interior took up hostilities against the French, and at the same time civil war broke out against the Sultan. Directly after the bombardment of Casablanca the Sultan's brother, Mulai Hafid, rose in rebellion against him, and was recognized as Sultan by the sacred college of Marrakesh. The French, as in duty bound, supported Abdul-Aziz, but it soon became evident that Hafid was the stronger, and the rebellion was said to be encouraged by Germany. Abdul-Aziz was finally defeated on August 19, 1908, and shortly afterwards retired on a pension, while the crown was transferred to his brother. Mulai Hafid gave guarantees that he would respect the Act of Algeciras and was duly recognized by the Powers. He showed energy, but completely failed to restore order to Mococco. The Rif tribesmen in the north defied his authority, and were soon involved in a war with Spain on their own account, while a pretender to the throne, El Roghi, gave considerable trouble in the south. This man, with many of his followers, was captured and ferociously tortured by Mulai Hafid in August 1909.

It is obvious that the ' threefold base ' of the Act of Algeciras had collapsed almost before the ink of that document was dry. It is easy to distribute blame broadcast for this collapse. French intrigues, German intrigues, Spanish intrigues, intrigues of financiers and speculators free from any particular national bias : all these causes are freely alleged to have been in operation, and it would need a bold man to meet such charges with a denial. Where the corpse lies the vultures will gather together. But the most important historical fact is the presence, or at least the rapidly expected

presence, of the corpse. Had there been no intrigues and no financiers in the world, had there been nothing but the most skilful and disinterested action by all the Powers, one doubts if they could have restored to Morocco any really effective sovereignty and independence. As the German Chancellor himself expressed it, with a candour not far removed from cynicism (Nov. 9, 1911), 'The Algeciras Act was intended to maintain the integrity and independence of Morocco with a view to the economic development of the country for the benefit of the trade of all the Powers parties to it. It was soon evident that one of the essential conditions was lacking, namely, a Sultan who was actual ruler of the country and was in a position to carry out the reforms contemplated. . . . This led to ever-growing influence on the part of France, for of the four Powers which since the seventies possessed treaty rights to maintain military missions at the Sultan's court, only the French mission had succeeded in establishing its position. In the same way France had long supplied Morocco with money.'

It was in this spirit that a Franco-German Declaration respecting Morocco had been drawn up in February 1909. Both parties, as usual, declare their attachment to the 'independence and integrity' of the unfortunate empire; the French Government undertakes not to obstruct 'German commercial and industrial interests in Morocco', while the German Government recognizes and promises not to impede 'the special political interests of France'. The declaration had been followed by long negotiations about different parts of West Africa, in which Germany was always pressing for something more than France—reasonably or unreasonably—was prepared to give. A treaty called 'the consortium', creating a Franco-German chartered company in the Congo region, was actually signed on Feb. 15, 1911, but not ratified.

This was the state of things when, in 1910, a year of constant uproar culminated in the rebellion of the tribes round Fez against the Sultan Mulai Hafid. By March 1911 Mequinez had been captured by the rebels, a new Sultan proclaimed, and Fez invested by considerable forces. On April 26, France, at the Sultan's call for help, sent a small force to relieve Fez, and at the same time sent notice of her action to the signatories of the Act of Algeciras. The expedition reached Fez after four days' hard fighting, but proved insufficient to disperse the tribes. A larger force was dispatched, and in conjunction with the Sultan succeeded in putting down the rebellion and maintaining order. Meantime it showed no sign of evacuating the place. The Radical opposition in France maintain, rightly or wrongly, that the Europeans in Fez were in no real danger and that the expedition was unnecessary; but that difficult question does not come within our present purview. We are concerned with the international crisis which immediately followed.

Germany raised no objection to the relief of Fez, but she pointed out very reasonably that the independence of Morocco had practically ceased to exist. 'It is urged that the Sultan himself summoned the French to his assistance. But a ruler who summons foreign troops to his assistance and who relies solely on the support of foreign bayonets is no longer the independent ruler on whose existence the Act of Algeciras was based.' (The German Chancellor, Bethmann-Hollweg, Nov. 9, 1911.) Germany therefore, arguing that France, not necessarily by any fault of her own, had gone beyond the letter and spirit of the Algeciras Act, took the line of demanding compensation in Paris. She did not propose any longer to defend Morocco; but, if there was plunder going she insisted that she should have her share. Such a claim was not particularly creditable nor strictly just. But, in the atmo-

sphere of colonial policy, it was intelligible. France, however, saw no good reason why she should make sacrifices. The demands for compensation, whatever they were, were not accepted ; the French Government showed unwillingness to come to a private understanding with Germany. In these circumstances the German Government took the curious step of suddenly sending a gunboat, the *Panther*, followed presently by a cruiser, the *Berlin*, to the closed harbour of Agadir on the southern coast of Morocco. (July 1, 1911.)

On this the crisis arose.

The mission of this gunboat was officially explained as intended to protect German subjects, but no one seemed even at the time to take this explanation very seriously. The Chancellor, speaking when the crisis was past, said that the *Panther* was sent to show that Germany had 'the right and the intention to protect our subjects in Morocco just as independently as France protected hers, as long as she came to no understanding with us'. That is: the Act of Algeciras was annulled. Germany no longer recognized the 'special political interests of France' though she might be ready to do so if France chose to deal. It amounted to a warning: 'All agreements about Morocco are off. If you do not deal with us we shall consider our own interests and take any steps we like with gunboats or cruisers or any other instruments that we consider suitable.' This is also the explanation given by the German Ambassador verbally to Sir Edward Grey on July 1. Considering that the conditions of 1906 were now swept away, and probably could not be restored, 'Germany was prepared to seek in conjunction with France some means of arriving at a definite understanding on the Morocco question.' If no such understanding could be reached, well, there was a gunboat, already followed by a cruiser, at Agadir.

This explanation Grey considered very serious. The

previous treaties, to which we had been parties, were regarded by Germany as having ceased to hold, and she was now intending, without us, in conjunction with France alone—or with France and Spain—to arrive at a definite solution of the Moroccan Question. And if these negotiations failed the next word seemed to lie with the *Panther* and the *Berlin*.

On July 3 Grey asked the Ambassador to call, and told him that 'we considered the situation so important that it must be discussed in a meeting of the Cabinet'; and that 'he wished the German Government to learn at once that, in our view, the situation was serious and important'. On July 4, after the Cabinet meeting, Grey explained to the Ambassador the view which the Cabinet had taken. Our attitude could not be an entirely 'disinterested' one. We had interests of our own at stake. We had treaty obligations to France. 'A new situation had been created by the dispatch of a German ship to Agadir. Future developments might affect British interests more directly than they had hitherto been affected, and therefore we could not recognize any new arrangements that might be come to without us.' To this statement the German Ambassador made no answer at the time, and as the days passed brought no answer from his Government.

This in itself was disturbing. On July 12 it so happened that the British Ambassador at Berlin had occasion to see the German Foreign Secretary on some minor matters, and in the course of the interview contrived to observe: 'that there had been mention of a conversation *à trois* between Germany, France, and Spain, the inference being that we were excluded from it.' Instead of making any explanation the Foreign Secretary merely said that there was no idea of such a conversation *à trois*. And with no further answer the days passed till July 21—a period of seventeen days. The German Government made no answer to a special

communication from our Cabinet as a whole on a matter, which, as we explained, we regarded as 'serious and important'. And meantime some negotiations or other were going on in Paris. It seemed as if the German Government was determined, in spite of our explanation to the Ambassador, to keep these negotiations secret from us; and such, we afterwards learned, was definitely the case. The German Foreign Secretary stated: 'The negotiations had begun: both parties had mutually agreed to observe the strictest secrecy. We took this obligation seriously and did not even inform our allies. France adopted a different course, and unfortunately communicated not only to the Press but also, it appears, in part to her friends, information which, inaccurate and incomplete as it was, was calculated to rouse suspicion of our intentions. We therefore did not negotiate further for a time, as long as the secrecy of the negotiations was not guaranteed.'

It is impossible that our Government should not feel uneasy. There was known to be a strong War-party in Germany. There was known to be a party in favour of a very ambitious colonial policy. We had asked in the most earnest way for a very simple assurance and had been met by stony silence. In the meantime negotiations in Paris began to trickle through. It appeared certain, 'and indeed it was the case, that the German Government had made demands with regard to the French Congo of an extent to which it was obvious to everybody who thought of it that neither the French Government nor the French Chamber could agree.' (Grey, Nov. 27, 1911.)

'But what', some critic may ask, 'was there to be afraid of? Why should we object to Germany and France bargaining as hard as they chose? France in Morocco had shown that she was well able to look after herself.'

Well, in the first place, we had our own definite

interests in Morocco; our Moroccan trade, and the strategical importance of the north coast. But, apart from these direct interests of ours, there were, I think, two main lines of danger.

1. Germany might try the policy of bullying France. She was much stronger than France, and there was a party in Germany openly advocating such a policy on the ground that France must either give way and yield Germany all she asked, or else risk a war and be thoroughly and profitably beaten. The air would be cleared; an enemy crushed, and the French colonies added to the German Empire. For the execution of this policy it was desirable to keep Great Britain outside the negotiations. It would be easier to press France hard if she was negotiating alone; and, if matters came to war, the less Great Britain had been involved in the quarrel the more likelihood there was of her standing out of the war. There was danger in 1911 that this party in Germany might get the upper hand, as it actually did in 1914, and we had therefore to be on our guard.

As for the war which might be forced on France, we were determined, if possible, to prevent it. And as for the negotiations, the concessions for which Germany was secretly pressing might easily be of a kind that would directly threaten our interests. The way to check both arms of this policy was to show at once that Great Britain was standing by France if France needed her.

2. Germany might try the policy of detaching France from Great Britain. We had ourselves had the experience of her attempt to detach us from France. (See below, pp. 115 ff.) She might now be trying to persuade France privately to promise neutrality in Germany's next war, as she tried in the previous year to persuade us. There was naturally a party in France which was somewhat shy of commitments to Great Britain, and

might be glad to obtain temporary security at the price of dissolving the Entente. This danger would become greater if Great Britain took no step to show that she would stand by France in the present difficulty. So from this point of view, also, we were bound to show our interest in France.

Hardly less imperative was the mere matter of prestige. We had been for many years the chief commercial Power in Morocco; we had vital strategic interests in the north coast. We had taken a leading part in the various treaties. We could hardly submit to the indignity of being suddenly treated as non-existent, while Germany settled with France, in a manner which she refused to explain to us, the future of Morocco.

It is a little difficult to form a clear judgement about the reality and imminence of these various dangers. A great deal of indirect and unsifted evidence seems to show that Germany, if not seeking war, or the humiliation of France, was at any rate making an experiment which might lead to those results. Grey referred in the House of Commons to 'information' which he had received. *The Times* newspaper, in a series of violent articles, professed also to have information of an alarming kind. And, without laying too much stress on the good faith of that ambitious journal, we have seen that the German Foreign Minister complained afterwards that the French Government had privately given information both to 'their friends' and to 'the Press'. On the other hand the official accounts we have of these proceedings from inside sources all date from the time when the crisis was over and it was to everybody's interest to minimize the gravity and disagreeableness of it. The information which came to *The Times* and even that which came to Sir Edward Grey in June 1911 suggested a much graver state of affairs than do the explanations given by the German, French, and British spokesmen in November of the same year.

In any case during the days of silence from July 4 to July 21 the British Cabinet was in a state of justifiable anxiety. On July 21 Grey again sent for the German Ambassador and explained the British point of view under three main heads. (1) We knew that Germany had proposed to France a rectification of the Congo frontier. 'We thought it possible that a settlement might be reached between Germany and France on this basis without affecting British interests. We should be very glad if this happened; and it was in the hope that it might happen at a later stage that we stood aside.' (2) We had heard, however, of much greater demands being made on France; negotiations were still proceeding and we hoped they might lead to a satisfactory conclusion. But 'it must be understood that, if they were unsuccessful, a very embarrassing situation would arise'. (That is, Morocco would have collapsed; the old treaties would have become, in Germany's view, null and void; and the new attempt to make a peaceful settlement about Morocco would have failed. In fact precisely that situation of international anarchy would have arisen which the secret treaty of 1904 had been intended to prevent.) (3) In the meantime the Germans were still remaining at Agadir, and we had no information to show what they were doing or seeking there. 'We could not tell to what extent the situation might be altered to our disadvantage; and, if the negotiations with France came to nothing, we should be obliged to do something to watch over British interests and to become a party to the discussions.' 'I made this statement,' Sir Edward explained in the House, 'because the situation seemed to me to be developing unfavourably.' The German Ambassador, while deprecating Sir Edward's fears, was still not in a position to make any reply on behalf of his Government.

On the same evening, as it happened, the Chancellor

of the Exchequer had to make an official speech at the Mansion House. These speeches at the Mansion House are generally regarded as important occasions for the exposition of ministerial policy, and both Grey and the Prime Minister considered that it would make a false impression, ' misleading to public opinion here and everywhere ', if no mention were made of the anxiety which we felt about the Moroccan situation. It is easy to guess what this false impression would have been. The Cabinet was generally supposed to contain both an imperialist and a pacifist wing, Mr. Lloyd George being the leader of the latter. If, after the language used by the Foreign Secretary, the Chancellor of the Exchequer entirely ignored the Morocco question and showed no interest in it, it would look as if the Cabinet was divided. The party in Germany which favoured aggression or ' bluff ' would be encouraged in their dangerous belief that Great Britain was in no case prepared for action. The question at issue really was whether Germany would deliberately refuse to explain her intentions on a matter seriously affecting our interests and at the same time proceed to settle that matter partly by occupying forbidden harbours and partly by secret conversations with France. Mr. Lloyd George spoke eloquently in the cause of peace and then added certain sentences. ' But I am also bound to say this ; that I believe it is essential in the highest interests not merely of this country but of the world, that Britain should at all hazards maintain her place and her prestige amongst the great Powers of the world. . . . If a situation were to be forced on us in which Peace could only be preserved by the surrender of the great and beneficent position Britain has won by centuries of heroism and achievements, by allowing Britain to be treated, where her interests were vitally affected, as if she were of no account in the Cabinet of Nations, then I say emphatically that Peace at that price would be a humiliation intolerable for a great country like ours to endure.'

The sentiments were unexceptionable, the language perfectly polite ; but in their political context they were understood, and rightly understood, to mean that, if it turned out that British interests were overridden or ignored in this secret arrangement which Germany was conducting about Morocco, we should not accept that arrangement even if we were threatened with war. The whimsical point about it is that, on the surface at least, it recalls in a somewhat unfortunate manner the speech made by the Kaiser at Agadir in 1905, the very speech to which we had taken such strong objection (p. 60).

Now the similarity does not go deep. Mr. Lloyd George had not first had the policy of the treaty explained to him and expressed his approval of it, and then a year later, suddenly and without notice, changed his mind. Mr. Lloyd George did not go as a War-Lord in a War-Lord's yacht and tell the Moors direct that they were to disregard the treaty, and that he would stand their friend if they did. But apart from these questions of method the fundamental facts of the two situations were very different. In 1904 the two Powers most interested in Morocco made a treaty together, which they explained in general though not in detail to the other Powers of Europe ; notably they made arrangements for safeguarding Germany's commercial interests—the only interests she claimed—and submitted them to her and obtained her approval. The 'secret treaty', however serious the objections to it may have been, did not affect any avowed interest of Germany's. Any lack of consideration which may have been shown towards Germany was in no way marked or personal. It was merely that, in the course of a very wide and often difficult settlement of many questions between England and France, there was included one issue on which the other Powers of Europe might reasonably have had some say. In 1911 the case was very different. A Power which had small interests in Morocco but immense military strength suddenly announced that all the treaties which

we had signed about Morocco were annulled, sent ships of war to a harbour where by treaty they were not to go, and proclaimed her intention to bring the affairs of Morocco to 'a definite solution' on lines which she entirely refused to explain to us; and this though our trade interests in Morocco were about three times as great as hers and our strategic interests vital. It would hardly have been prudent or even fair towards Germany if we had not given a clear warning beforehand that we reserved our full right to object to this 'definite solution' which she would not explain.

Whether Mr. Lloyd George's words were too strong or not, the result of the speech was curious. A violent storm in the press, both in England and Germany, *The Times* and the Pan-German organs alike trying to shout each other down; a satisfactory explanation from the German Ambassador on the 24th, followed by a 'very stiff' interview on the 25th; and almost immediately afterwards a complete change of tone on the part of the German Government and a sudden and thoroughgoing improvement of relations. What actually occurred can only be conjectured; but it looks as if the Mansion House speech, coming on top of Grey's explanation of July 21, had brought the issue in Germany between the Pan-Germans and the Moderates to a sudden head, resulting in a victory for the Moderates. This hypothesis is rather borne out by the attitude of the Ambassador in the 'very stiff' interview. He there gave Grey a satisfactory explanation of the objects and plans of Germany in the negotiations, but, on the other hand, forbade him to make any public use of the explanation, lest it should look as if Germany were yielding to threats. Grey, in return, declined to give any public explanation of the Mansion House speech, and both parties, as Grey confessed with a smile, 'stood on their dignity'—always a somewhat ridiculous proceeding, but doubtless at times necessary. On the 27th the Ambassador returned with a message from

the German Chancellor. It gave a complete explanation of German aims in Morocco, expressed in terms of perfect friendliness both to ourselves and France.

The storm blew over. 'As to the subsequent negotiations I need only say this. The French Government consulted us at every point where it seemed at all likely that British interests might be affected—most loyally at every point—and, except perhaps once or twice on subsidiary points of purely economic detail in Morocco itself, we were able to say that British interests were not involved by the proposals or counter-proposals. . . . And everything we did or said in our communications with the French Government was in the direction of helping and not impeding the negotiations.' (Grey, Nov. 27, 1911.)

The Lloyd George speech has been much praised and much denounced. That Minister's pacific and friendly attitude towards Germany was regarded as beyond suspicion, but this fact only enhanced the effect, for good or evil, of the speech. The Radicals pointed with indignation to the storm of angry feeling which swept through the Press in both countries and professed contemptuously to regard the diatribes of *The Times*, then and always the most bitter enemy of the Liberal Government, as a faithful representation of the attitude of Sir Edward Grey. More moderate opinion saw the justification of the speech in the undoubted clearing of the air which immediately followed it. Of course there were other causes at work also, more than we can hope to trace. Politicians have generally inclined to the belief that, to a German Government which was hesitating between two policies, this proof of the unity and determination of Great Britain was enough to incline the scale against the side of 'bluff' and towards the side of fair dealing. Economists have been inclined to lay stress on a different cause for the change of Germany's tone, viz. the fact that German banks and industrial enterprises were at this moment very largely dependent on the capital of French investors.

This seems to be true ; and it is confidently asserted that about this time a deputation of bankers waited on the Kaiser to explain how credit was already shaken owing to the disquietude about Morocco, that French capital was being withdrawn, and that unless public opinion could be reassured the gravest consequences might ensue. Germany, in fact, could not declare war, because the money with which she would have to wage it was predominantly foreign money. If this is true, it would be interesting to trace in detail the change which has taken place since 1911 in the organization of German finance.[1]

From whatever causes, the tone of Germany after July 27, 1911, became suddenly moderate ; and the policy of the Entente with France seemed, in addition to the enormous advantages it brought about in the relations between France and Great Britain, to have also done some service to the stability of peace in Europe.

The next stage in the policy of the Ententes was an agreement between Great Britain and Russia.

6. THE ENTENTE WITH RUSSIA : THE TREATY OF 1907

The intimacy induced by co-operation in the Conference of Algeciras gave an opportunity for that settlement of differences with Russia which was the next object of Sir Edward Grey's policy. The enormous relief which had resulted to British activities all over the world from the settlement with France made our Government all the more anxious to have a clean slate with Russia too. In the Balkans, fortunately, the aims of the two nations had ceased to clash. We had seen the error of our ways, and were buttressing up the Turks no longer. There

[1] See Norman Angell, *Foundations of International Policy* (1914), pp. 115 ff. He quotes *The Times* Berlin correspondent, the British Consul-General in Germany, and the *Berlin Bourse Gazette*.

remained the danger of our juxtaposition in Asia. All along an immense and unsettled frontier, from the Persian Gulf to the mountains of Thibet, the two vast empires were steadily drawing nearer to one another. Both were vigorous Powers, both were ruling and conquering Powers. Each felt jealousy and alarm at the advance of the other. Now Sir Edward Grey's principle is stated clearly: 'When the interests of two Powers are constantly touching and rubbing against one another,' he says, 'it is hard to find a half-way house between constant liability to friction and cordial friendship.'

In 1906 and 1907 there were frank and thorough discussions between Great Britain and Russia concerning all the points where their interests 'rubbed'. The result was the treaty of 1907. This covered the whole line of frontier questions: (1) Both parties agreed to abstain from any tampering with Thibet; Thibet was a united and peaceful nation and its mountains made a firm frontier. (2) Russia recognized the right of Great Britain to control the foreign policy of the large and loose medley of tribes who acknowledge the rule of the Amir of Afghanistan. This control had existed before, but had not been recognized by Russia. (3) Lastly, in Persia, which was a badly decayed empire in a state of chronic disorder, the two Powers agreed to confine their interests within certain lines, which marked off their respective spheres of influence, and undertook to consult one another freely and frankly on any difficulties that arose. Meantime the 'integrity and independence' of Persia were to be maintained, the 'political status' of Afghanistan was not to be changed—i. e. it was not to be annexed or made a British Protectorate—while the 'territorial integrity' and the 'internal administration' of Thibet were not to be interfered with. That is, it was the natural wish of the two Great Powers that the buffer states should be kept intact.[1]

[1] The texts are given in *Select Treaties and Documents*, by R. B. Mowat, Oxford Press, 1915, 1*s*. 6*d*.

The great merits of this treaty are obvious to any reasonable mind. But it has been sharply criticized. The arrangements about Afghanistan and Thibet have escaped blame in England, though I believe there have been some complaints in Russia, on the ground that they check Russia's natural ambitions. The Persian arrangement is attacked on two grounds: (1) the line drawn is too favourable to Russia and gives Great Britain a poor bargain; with which is combined (2) the accusation that in the practical working of the agreement Sir Edward has been both too trustful towards Russian statements and too yielding towards Russian demands. (3) The ostensible promise not to intervene beyond a certain line amounted, so it is argued, in practice to an encouragement to each Power to advance at once up to that line, and must result in something like a partition of Persia and the ruin of her independence.

Now if these criticisms stood really on their own feet, and had no unspoken impetus behind them, they would be easily met. The question who got the best of the bargain either in the original treaty or in the various points of detail that have arisen in working it out, is a question that no one really cares about. In the Russian Duma M. Sazonof is accused of having yielded too much to the British; in the House of Commons Sir Edward Grey is accused of having yielded too much to the Russians. And in both cases the Minister's main answer is that the fact of having reached a loyal and honest agreement is such a great gain to both parties that it hardly matters which of the two has gained most. And as to the delimitation of the two spheres of influence, it is clear that, if honestly carried out, it did not increase but greatly limited the freedom of the two Powers to interfere with Persia. The strength of the criticism really lies in the critic's utter mistrust of Russia.

The whole object of the Entente policy was to put an end to a state of constant friction, suspicion, and intrigue,

and to substitute for it a practice of mutual confidence and understanding. And the criticisms really rest on a sort of half-conscious doctrine that in dealing with Russia all friendly relations are undesirable. Let other nations make peaceful agreements if they will. Between Great Britain and Russia, since a mutual boycott is physically impossible, the only healthy relation is either hostile intrigue or open war. Our first step, for example, should be the subsidizing of the Russian revolutionary parties! Few people, I suppose, would openly profess such a doctrine, but the denunciations sometimes uttered against the Persian agreement seem to imply something very like it.

It is complained that Sir Edward Grey habitually believed the word of the Russian Government. The charge is admitted. The purpose of the Entente was to achieve a cordial understanding with Russia in place of constant friction and suspicion. How silly, how suicidal, it would have been, in carrying out the arrangement, to re-introduce the very atmosphere that we were trying our hardest to avoid! If we were determined continually to throw doubt on the honesty of the Russian representatives and haggle over every dispute that arose, it was not much use having any agreement at all. The fact is, no two powers could ever co-operate or maintain cordial relations if one Government habitually acted towards the other as English Russophobes would like to act towards Russia. This whole class of problem is of the utmost importance; and I cannot but feel that both from the standpoint of common sense and from that of international idealism, Sir Edward Grey's principle is triumphantly right and ought never to have been controverted by any Liberal or Socialist. It is all very well for thoroughgoing hard-crusted Jingoes, who take a pride in hating foreigners and encouraging war-scares, to argue that the Government of Russia—or France, or Germany, or the United States for that matter—is so inherently treacherous

that we honest Englishmen ought never to admit them to any treaties or negotiations without showing at every point that we regard them as rogues. I have at different times read, in journals of extreme views, articles preaching this doctrine with regard to all the principal nations: the French were all scoundrels at one time because of the Dreyfus case; before that it was the Americans because of various lynching scandals, before that the Russians because of pogroms, now of course it is the Germans for a thousand reasons. And if we look at foreign journals of the same type we shall find it is the English, because of the Boer War or the Militant Suffragists or because Home Rule is denied to Ireland. The truth is that the ordinary public in every nation is mostly very ignorant of the home politics of every other nation and at the same time very credulous of evil. It has been cynically said that, if all our private lives were suddenly revealed, there is not one living person who would not be cut by all the others. Without going so far as that, there is certainly no nation in the world which would not be rejected as an outcast from society if all the accusations printed against it in foreign newspapers were proved true.

'That is all very well', it may be answered. 'But is it not the case that some nations do put themselves outside the pale? The German Emperor made an intimate alliance, and drove some very lucrative bargains, with Abdul the Damned at the moment when that potentate was conducting the Armenian massacres; that was generally regarded as a rather scoundrelly proceeding, but on your principles it was right?' I quite admit that there are degrees. There is an extreme degree of proved iniquity in a government which would justify other nations in declaring war on it, even if their own interests were not affected. There is another degree which, if not justifying war, ought at least to prevent alliance and co-operation. Cordial confidence in the recent government of Mexico, for instance, would present difficulties. But,

all the same, this principle of putting a civilized nation beyond the pale from disapproval of its home politics is a monstrously dangerous one, and to apply it to Russia would in my opinion be both gross injustice and stark folly.

Russia is the least and latest civilized of European Powers. She has been held chained later than the rest of us by a bad tradition of corruption, of drunkenness, of lying diplomacy, of obscurantism, of government by spies and secret police. She is passing through a long-drawn revolution, which began with the emancipation of the serfs and is not yet near its end, a revolution conducted sometimes by the bomb and the revolver against the knout and the gallows; sometimes by reasoning and enlightenment on the one side and gradual measures of reform on the other; practically always, on both sides, by lives of heroic courage and devoted public work. Russia's claim to a high place among the leading nations of the world rests chiefly upon her non-political achievements, on her incomparable literature, her music and science and art, and the brilliant growth of her universities; but any one who will study the actual bills passed by the Duma in the last five or six years in the matters of education, social reform, peasant administration and justice, public health, land tenure and labour-insurance, will, I think, realize that hardly any nation in the world is advancing faster. It is worth noting also that in the matter of Foreign Policy, M. Sazonoff has been a singularly peaceful and straightforward influence. He has been the object of constant attacks in the Duma on this ground, and especially for his over-conciliatory attitude towards Germany.

The fact is that we English Liberals and Socialists are apt to form our conception of Russia from the accounts of the political exiles. All our natural sympathies conspire to make us see with their eyes, their beauty of character often fascinates us, and the martyrdom they

have endured blots out from our minds all thought of their possible errors or even crimes. Yet all history teaches us how little the stories of exiles are to be trusted. Republican and Imperial France were not what the Émigrés depicted ; eighteenth-century England was not what she was supposed to be among the Jacobites at the Court of Versailles : Russia cannot really be like the picture drawn by *Free Russia* and the revolutionary refugees. And certainly our other authorities speak with a very different voice. There are many English travellers and social students who have specially tried to know Russia. Best of all, perhaps, there is the great company of realistic Russian novelists. These writers differ of course in detail one from another : they give pictures of the Russian people and the Russian Government sometimes favourable and sometimes extremely unfavourable ; but they certainly do not suggest to their most excitable reader that the Russian Empire is an institution so iniquitous that it ought to be put outside the pale of human society. Such ideas belong to the politics of romance.

7. PERSIA : THE WORKING OF THE TREATY OF 1907

These, it may be said, are general considerations. They may be generally valid, but how do they stand when confronted by the particular facts ? ' While Persia struggled,' writes a Nationalist critic, ' Great Britain and Russia have stood by with bludgeons . . . and have smitten her to the ground whenever one of her more convulsive death-struggles bore the appearance of an attempt to rise and walk.' If anything remotely like that description is true, most Liberals will feel that too high a price has been paid for our friendship, and perhaps even for our peace, with Russia.

Now I do not know Persia, and I cannot see my way clear through the almost maddening complexities, sometimes tragic and sometimes grotesque, which make up Persian history for the last ten years. I have read a certain number of books and articles, I have read some thousands of official dispatches on Persian matters, in order to form some kind of opinion in my own mind about our policy. In result, I have not discovered a satisfactory solution of the Persian problem. I do not think our policy has been successful, yet I do not see any other policy that would not probably have been worse. Things were perhaps better in 1913 than they were a few years before; but we have certainly not enabled Persia to rise, under a constitutional government, from the slough of anarchy and insolvency in which she lay under Mohammed Ali. I do not feel any enthusiasm for our Persian record. On the other hand, if one takes the various crises as they arise, and considers the telegrams on which Sir Edward Grey has to take action and the decisions which he gives, it is usually very hard indeed to think what better decision could have been taken. Reasonable, helpful, firm, sometimes over-scrupulous, invariably loyal and honest, the decisions of the British Foreign Secretary almost always leave the situation rather better than they found it. After all, it is not always the fault of the doctors if the patient dies. And I do not think that any one who has not read the Blue Books can really form an adequate conception of the chaos out of which the new Persian Government was trying helplessly to build up the constitutional and independent state of its ideal. Governors who have no troops, Governors whose troops take ' bast ', or sanctuary, whenever they are asked to move, Governors who weep when told to execute a robber because the robber's blackmail formed their main source of income; armies in the command of lunatics; armies composed of professional robbers and professional

clergymen ; armies which march out to fight each other and end by swapping head-quarters instead ; roads which can only be used when the weather is too severe for the robbers to venture out ; robbers who have to be given a pension to induce them to leave Persia ; robbers who are made Governors-General to induce them to put down other robbers ; solemn Khans of the desert depositing their oil-mine shares as security for their good behaviour on a particular road ; honest wages nowhere and blackmail everywhere, and amidst it all the Baluchis raiding in the south and the ex-Shah's partisans and relations continually popping up with new rebellions in the north ; the Cabinet and the Chamber quarrelling, Governments resigning, Ministers taking 'bast' from their opponents in the nearest consulate, and their opponents taking 'bast' from them ; rebels taking 'bast', unpaid troops taking 'bast', the officials who ought to have paid them taking 'bast' ; Prime Ministers leaping into the nearest coach and bidding the coachman drive headlong to Europe : the disasters which ensue from such a state of things need not be put down forthwith to the fault of foreign diplomats.[1]

Let us take certain points in the history which seem specially important.

[1] Taking *bast* seems generally to consist in packing up provisions as if for a picnic and then settling quietly down in some place where your presence causes some inconvenience and where your enemies will not venture to do you violence, e.g. a Consulate, a Governor-General's stables, the steps of a Treasury, &c. *Bast* can be taken by a single person in fear of injury, but is generally practised by large crowds : e.g. on one occasion 3,000 people, with food and musical instruments, suddenly sat down in the yard round a telegraph office belonging to the Eastern Telegraph Company. It was their way of protesting against the reforms of a neighbouring philanthropist. They were coaxed away after three days. Residents in Persia accuse the Blue Books of softening down the real facts in order not to distress the Foreign Office. If this is true, Persia must be a more astonishing country than is indicated above.

The chief provisions of the treaty of 1907 were as follows :

1. North of a certain line (Kasr-i-Shirin Isfahan Yezd Kakh to the junction of the three frontiers), Great Britain gave an undertaking to seek no political or commercial concession, and to refrain from opposing the acquisition of such concessions by Russia.

2. South of a certain line (Afghan frontier Gazik Birjend Kerman Bander-Abbas), Russia gave a similar undertaking to Great Britain.

3. Between these lines either country might obtain concessions.

4. Existing concessions should be respected.

5. Should Persia fail to pay her debts to either Power, each Power reserved the right to pay itself out of the revenues of its own sphere of influence.

In addition to the treaty, a letter was published in which Russia recognized the special interest of Great Britain in the Persian Gulf. This letter was highly important, as we had been for a long time in occupation of the Persian Gulf and were responsible for buoying, lighting, and policing its waters. It was a position which we had not consciously sought, but to which we had been led by over a century of work against the Slave Trade and piracy and general insecurity and the traffic in arms. At one time, for instance, the Turkish Government asked us to remove our buoys, as it desired to put down its own. We removed them ; and then, since no Turkish buoys appeared and the waters were dangerous, after about a year's waiting, put them down again. However, the Gulf was now definitely under British influence, and in pre-entente times it had formed a specially sensitive spot where Russia might always cause us annoyance, or even force us into a quarrel.

The Russian sphere of influence is far and away larger, richer, and more important than the British, and the stipulation about the Gulf is hardly enough to redress

the balance. But the fact is, that Russia's interest in Persia is much greater than ours. Persia has a conterminous frontier with Russia for over a thousand miles, lies just in the line of Russia's natural expansion, and has far more trade and intercourse with Russia than with any other Power. (The figures of trade are, in millions sterling : Russia 8·29, Britain 3·12, Turkey 1·38, and the other Powers nowhere.) Also the most satisfactory part of the Persian army is the so-called ' Cossack Brigade ', trained and commanded by Russian officers since 1879.

Great Britain's interest in Persia was chiefly a negative one. We objected to a state of chronic disorder and intrigue which hampered our trade and was likely to lead to trouble between us and Russia ; we objected to the establishment of Russia in positions which might threaten our Indian frontier, and we could not allow any naval Power to establish itself in the Persian Gulf, on the flank of our Indian communications. For the rest, it is our interest, even from the most selfish point of view, that Persia should be as large and healthy as possible.

On the whole, therefore, Great Britain has no reason to complain of the circumstance that, by the Agreement, she gets less than Russia does. She gets the great fact of agreement and security from hostile intrigue.

But what about Persia ? Has she any right to complain of the Treaty ? On the face of it, clearly not. There is no wrong to Persia in making arrangements about ' commercial concessions ' which she may (or may not) in the future grant to Britain or Russia. Persia is in that state of development in which she needs and will continue to need roads, railways, mining plant, police forces, &c., and cannot pay for them herself. She must in the first instance get them either by raising foreign loans or by granting concessions to foreign companies. That the concessionaires, if not constantly watched, are likely to swindle her may be assumed as self-evident.

All such companies need watching, and foreign companies in a weak and corruptly governed country like Persia need very particular watching. But the alternative policy, to refuse all loans to Persia and to accept no concessions from her, would be merely cruel. It would condemn Persia to permanent stagnation, and prevent her attaining either prosperity or settled government. As a matter of fact, the British companies in Persia seem to have behaved well and to be rather popular with the Constitutional party. And, apart from vague charges, I have not come across any proved misconduct on the part of the Russians.

Furthermore, it seems on the whole desirable that, if concessions and loans are necessary, Persia should be induced to rely for them on her two responsible neighbours rather than flung open to the speculative and often corrupt overtures of the financial world at large. Most of the money borrowed by the Persian Government before 1907 was at 12 to 15 per cent. interest. Under the Russo-British entente in 1913 they had only to pay 7 per cent., and some of the better-secured loans, issued at 85, bore only 5 per cent. On the one hand the security was greatly improved, and on the other the organizers of the loan were not speculators anxious to make money, but responsible Governments anxious to have order established in Persia. This is such a great improvement, in itself, that it seems justifiable of the two Powers to have actually vetoed loans from other sources. On one particular occasion, it may be, some private bank or foreign company could offer better terms for the sake of getting a financial foothold in Persia or even for the sake of working some political intrigue. But there was the danger of the country becoming a Tom-tiddler's ground for speculators, and the further grave disadvantage that, in case of Persia's failure to meet her liabilities, an unknown army of creditors with unknown and untested claims would have

appeared, demanding satisfaction and refusing to be bound by the proposals of the two Governments. As far as loans and concessions are concerned, it seems to me that the principle of the Agreement was right. And another rule also, which was not part of the Agreement but was applied in practice, seems reasonable and legitimate, though it has been furiously attacked. I mean the claim of the Powers, when they advanced money to the Persian Government, to insist on some control over the spending of it. The loans which had reduced Persia to the neighbourhood of bankruptcy before 1907 had for the most part been merely squandered or embezzled ; and neither squandering nor embezzlement, as even Mr. Shuster amply testifies, had very greatly slackened under the new régime. It was no good pouring money into that empty treasury unless there was some security that the money would be reasonably spent. The chief criticism which might, I think, fairly be passed on the loan policy of the two Powers is that, on one or two occasions, the loans might have been more prompt and generous and the supervision more effective.

So much for the principle of the Agreement. But critics suggest that, even if well meant, it was disloyally carried out, especially by Russia. For one thing, they urge, Russia was always conspiring with the Shah against the Constitutional Government.

The history on this point is curious. The Persian Revolution of 1905–6 was, as a matter of fact, stimulated and guided by the example of the Russian Revolution. Naturally the sympathy of the Russian official classes was instinctively royalist and anti-constitutional, and the surprising thing is that they behaved as correctly and honestly as they did. No doubt various private traders and Cossacks, and even consuls, may have behaved pretty badly, but one receives an impression of great good faith and loyalty both from the Minister for Foreign Affairs, M. Sazonof, and the Minister in

Teheran, M. Poklewski-Koziell. In November 1907 the Shah Mohammed Ali was found to be intriguing against the constitution which he had sworn to observe. Immediately the Russian and British Ministers warned him, and he gave way. In the following February two bombs were thrown at him while he was driving. It does not seem very blameworthy that in the following June, when feeling was highly excited in Teheran, the Russian Minister warned the Nationalists that 'grave consequences might ensue if anything happened to the Shah'. (The I.L.P. pamphlet which expresses indignation at this warning does not mention the two bombs.) Shortly afterwards the Shah departed from Teheran, leaving orders for his bodyguard to disperse the 'Mejliss' or National Assembly. The bodyguard consisted of Persian 'Cossacks' with Russian officers; and they obeyed the Shah just as the Swiss Guard obeyed Louis XVI. Great Britain and Russia intervened; prevented the Shah from carrying out his plan for abolishing the Mejliss, and forced him to hold a general election. In the course of the civil war which followed, the Powers chiefly devoted themselves to keeping order. The Russians intervened once at Tabriz to save the Constitutionalists, who were besieged by the Shah's troops; the fortunes of the Royalists paled, and eventually even the faithful Cossack bodyguard went over to the Constitutional side. The Shah then took 'bast' in the Russian consulate—a consulate is the regular sanctuary in Persia; the British would have done just as well—and abdicated. He was granted a pension and escorted off the soil of Persia by a mixed guard of Russian Cossacks and Indian Sowars. So far the Russian record seems to me very respectable. They did from time to time shelter divers defaulting princes and princesses from bailiffs and other officers of the law. But what loyal Russian, with any sentiment in him, could be expected to do otherwise? The gravest charge which

can be clearly established against them is that they continued to keep their small garrison at Tabriz when both the British and the Persian Governments considered that all need for it had passed and repeatedly pressed for its withdrawal.

The year 1909 saw a new Shah, Ahmad Mirza, and a new Mejliss ; an interminable wrangle about the loan from the two Powers, which the new Government wanted, the extreme Nationalists opposed, and the Powers would not grant without some control over the spending of it ; in the provinces general disorder, and in special an attack by robbers on the Russian Consul-General at Bushire, and another on the British representative at Shiraz. In this latter two Indian soldiers were killed. A British note was presented in November 1909 insisting on reparation and on better policing of the road ; and, since nothing had been done by October 1910, it was followed by an ultimatum. Unless order were restored on the Ispahan-Bushire road within three months, Indian troops would be sent to police it. This threat was never carried out. The British Government was greatly averse to taking such a step, and went on endeavouring to restore security by strongly backing the new Regent, Nasr-ul-Mulk, while the extreme Nationalists still thought it their duty to paralyse the Government. The Regent was at first fairly successful, but in December 1912 a shooting party of two British officers with some Indian sowars was attacked near Shiraz, and Captain Eckford killed.

An armed police force was a crying necessity, especially in the south. An offer of British-Indian police was made, but declined by the Persian Government and not pressed by the British. Russians were out of the question. Eventually Sweden, as a remote and disinterested Power, was asked, and consented, to send some gendarmerie officers. This arrangement has been much criticized, and was probably only a second-best.

The Swedes knew nothing of Persia, neither its language, its customs, its manner of warfare, nor even the ordinary rules of health that must be practised in a hot climate. And it is probable that, if Persia and Russia had both approved, a force of native tribesmen under British-Indian officers would have been much more rapidly satisfactory. However, the officers appear to have been honest and energetic, and the force which they trained, though consisting of poor material, irregularly paid and insufficient in numbers, is said by 1914 to have become the most reliable in Persia.

More serious still were the royalist outbreaks in favour of the ex-Shah. His partisans were in a state of chronic rebellion or conspiracy, as also were the extreme Nationalists. In 1909–10 a royalist rising in the province of Azerbaijan, in the extreme north-west, was victorious until duly crushed by the Russians. Another royalist movement was started in the same province by a Russian officer of Persian extraction; he was promptly captured by the Russians and his rebellion suppressed. There was constant disorder in this province, especially in the chief town, Tabriz, and Russia began to be more drastic in her methods of repression. Eventually Mohammed Ali himself secretly landed at Gumesh Tepe on the Caspian Sea and proclaimed himself Shah. I see no reason to suspect the Russian Government of having connived at this enterprise. The story of an interview at Vienna between Mohammed Ali and the Russian Ambassador has been exploded. But discipline is bad in the Russian Foreign Office, and it is likely enough that various individual Russians did not report to their superiors what they should have reported. In any case, when once the Shah had landed, Russia was not disposed to suppress him. She had put down one royalist rebellion after another, when the constitutional Government had been unable to cope with them. She had by nature no liking for constitutionalists as against anointed

kings, and she proposed to Great Britain to let the Shah have his chance and then support whatever government proved to have the greatest hold on the country. Great Britain maintained firmly that he could not be recognized. As a matter of fact there ensued civil war on a large scale, at the end of which the royalists were defeated everywhere except in the north-west. But meantime a new source of confusion had arisen, the most ironic piece of tragedy in the whole story.

8. PERSIA CONTINUED: MR. MORGAN SHUSTER AS TREASURER-GENERAL

Of all the many difficulties with which the Persian Government had to struggle, the worst and most fundamental was lack of money. The country had great possibilities. But habitual disorder had destroyed both agriculture and industry; the administration was habitually corrupt, and commerce could not stand up against the perpetual presence of robbery and blackmail. A Government which had first a large armed police force, and secondly the money to pay it, could at least have begun to make head against the innumerable forces of disorder. What they needed was a Finance Minister Extraordinary, honest, able, courageous, experienced, and possessed of extremely wide powers.

It seemed as if Providence had shown them the very man. Great Britain and Russia cordially agreed to the appointment of an American mission of financial advisers, headed by Mr. Morgan Shuster. Mr. Shuster knew nothing of Persia, but had had important experience of Customs work in Cuba and in the Philippines after the Spanish-American War. He was a man of irreproachable integrity and indomitable resolution. Before he had been in Persia a fortnight he presented to the Mejliss a Bill, drawn by his own hand, in which he demanded

' the necessary powers ' for carrying out his grave responsibility. The ' necessary powers ' amounted to something like a dictatorship. Mr. Shuster was made Treasurer-General, and became the chief ruling power in Persia. When it further appeared that he considered himself the servant of an independent Persia, that he ignored the existence of Russia and Great Britain and refused to call at the Embassies, the Nationalist majority in the Mejliss obeyed his every word.

It seemed almost too good to be true, that Persia should thus be offered the chance of salvation. And it was. Ironic Fate had decreed that one small wrong-headedness in Mr. Shuster should wreck everything. In a situation which needed, among greater qualities, a considerable degree of tact and fairmindedness, Mr. Shuster happened to be both a very headstrong man and a prejudiced Russophobe. He acted like the head of an independent kingdom, intolerant of control within and impatient of diplomatic courtesies without. One only wishes that before his assumption of office he had had two hours' conversation with Grey himself or with some one who knew the problems and difficulties of Persia.

His first quarrel was with the Persian Cabinet. He vetoed their policy by refusing supplies; the scene reached such a pitch that the Prime Minister, Sipahdar, a man generally well spoken of by our Consuls, fled from the room and ordered his coachman to drive to Europe. He was eventually induced to return, but Mr. Shuster refused to work with him, and the Government, which had been doing rather well in great difficulties, was again paralysed. Meantime, Mr. Shuster became the protector of the extreme Nationalists, associated intimately with men of somewhat turbulent records, and especially made no concealment of his detestation of Russia.

He needed a force of armed police for Treasury purposes, and for some reason would not make use of the Swedes. Perhaps they were not sufficiently under his

control. He formed a new gendarmerie, and proposed that an English soldier, Major Stokes, should be put in command of it. The appointment, on its own merits, would seem to have been a very good one. But as the force would be bound to act in the north as well as in the south, the proposal was not one which we could quite expect Russia to approve. Grey consulted St. Petersburg, and the Russian Government not unreasonably suggested that either a Swede should be appointed or that there should be two forces of gendarmes, one for the south and one for the north, commanded by an Englishman and a Russian respectively. Sir Edward Grey is accused by Mr. Shuster of betraying him in the matter of this appointment. The truth seems to be that Mr. Shuster's sanguine temperament and his habit of 'rushing things' made him believe that he had only to force Major Stokes's appointment through and Grey was bound to back him. He induced the unhappy Cabinet to agree to the appointment, and then found it vetoed by Russia with the full concurrence of Grey.

Mr. Shuster proceeded to act rather like the doomed hero of some Greek tragedy. His stubbornness was his undoing. He proceeded to appoint three other British subjects as his financial agents: one at Shiraz, which was in the British sphere; one at Ispahan, just inside the Russian sphere; the third, Mr. Lecoffre, at Tabriz, in the very heart of the Russian sphere, and close to the Russian border. Mr. Lecoffre was not by birth an Englishman, like Major Stokes, but he was proud of being a British subject, and happened also to be a pronounced Russophobe. The Russian Government had nothing to say against the appointment at Shiraz; they agreed to make no objection to the appointment at Ispahan, as it was far south, and only on the edge of their sphere. But they did object, as Sir Edward Grey had warned Mr. Shuster that they were bound to object, to the appointment at Tabriz. Mr. Shuster took no

notice of the objection, and persisted in the appointment of Mr. Lecoffre as well as the two others.

The final clash came in a curious manner. Mr. Shuster had decided—not unjustly, as far as one can judge—to confiscate the large estates of a brother of the ex-Shah, Shoa-es-Sultaneh. Part of this prince's property was a house which was mortgaged to the Russian bank—or so at least the bank claimed—and which lay close to the Russian Consulate. Now Russians engaged in commerce and the consular service seem, naturally enough, to have less sense of correct behaviour or less control over their feelings than ministers and diplomats. And when Mr. Shuster's Treasury officials came to seize this house the Russian Consul sent men to drive them away, and is said to have been reprimanded by his Minister for doing so. Mr. Shuster immediately sent one gendarme with an explanation to the Consulate and a hundred gendarmes with rifles to the mortgaged house. There was resistance and some trouble, and, instead of apologizing, or negotiating, or attempting a compromise, Mr. Shuster, through the Cabinet, demanded the recall of the Russian Consul-General.

This was the end. The Russians, as seems to be their way in Persian matters, after a great deal of rather loose-jointed tolerance, burst into a blaze of anger. They presented an ultimatum, demanding the withdrawal of the gendarmes and an apology. This was accepted by the Prime Minister and what remained of the Cabinet. It was utterly refused by Mr. Shuster and the Nationalist Mejliss. Russian troops began to move, and a second ultimatum demanded the dismissal of Mr. Shuster and Mr. Lecoffre, an engagement that no further appointments of foreigners should be made without the consent of the two Powers, and lastly—the only cruel part of the demand—that Persia should pay the cost of the Russian expedition. By the time the troops had reached Kasvin the ultimatum was accepted, and a few weeks

later Mr. Shuster had left Persia. It ought to have been mentioned that he had spent part of his scanty leisure in writing a fierce anti-Russian pamphlet, which was translated into Persian and circulated broadcast.

I can well understand, though I think such a view is far too despairing, how a patriotic Persian may feel that Mr. Shuster's dismissal marked the downfall of his country's hopes. But I can hardly understand how any one in the world could have expected the Russian authorities to submit to Mr. Shuster much longer. And surely it is manifest that, if the British Government intended to maintain the Anglo-Russian understanding and to abide by the terms of its own treaty, it could not possibly have continued to support Mr. Shuster. As Sir Edward Grey said in the House, 'the object of the agreement was to prevent the two nations mining and counter-mining against each other in the somewhat squalid diplomatic struggle which had gone on for years, each trying to gain an advantage at the expense of the other, we always troubled about the Indian frontier on the one side, and the Russian Government always afraid that we were going to steal some advantage towards their frontier on the other.' If that object was to be attained, Mr. Shuster had undoubtedly to go.

The Russian troops, meanwhile, were in occupation of Resht and Tabriz, and had marched as far south as Kasvin. It is possible that if left alone they might have been induced to retire. But they were, naturally enough, attacked by Nationalist bands, both at Resht and at Tabriz. The Shiah priests, who in Persia had often taken an active part in preaching strife, both on the Nationalist and on the Royalist side, preached a holy war against Russia. Guerrilla fighting broke out, and the Russian troops who bombarded Tabriz found the bodies of their comrades mutilated. They forthwith put to death eight ringleaders of the Nationalists, among them the chief Mullah of that province, who had been the centre of the

'holy war'. According to Nationalist statements, they cut this man in two pieces and marched between them into the citadel. This ferocious act was adopted from an ancient Persian custom, and was no doubt intended to impress and cow the arch-priest's followers, the more so as it was done on a sacred day. The Russians have never since evacuated Tabriz, and are probably in permanent occupation of the north-west corner province of which Tabriz is the centre. But for the British Agreement, one may suspect, they would have occupied it six or seven years earlier.

Sir Edward Grey succeeded in getting them to retire from Kasvin and the interior. (They have returned there during the present war.) The two Powers together compelled the ex-Shah to return to Europe, under pain of being deprived of his pension. A Belgian Customs officer, M. Mornard, who was considered the best man available both by the Russians and by our Consul-General, was appointed to succeed Mr. Shuster at the Treasury, and £400,000 advanced to him for necessary expenses. Mr. Shuster accuses him of dishonesty, and I believe he has since resigned.

The same miserable tale continues up to the end of 1913, where the last Blue Book ends, the mischief-maker-in-chief being now not the ex-Shah, but the lunatic Prince Salar-ed-Dowleh. What has happened since August 1914 is, I imagine, known to no one. In reading the detailed correspondence it is easy to understand how any of the three principal parties concerned might be excused for losing patience with the others. The Russians, sick of continual disorder and anti-Russian propaganda, continual conspiracies and shifts of government, continual advances of money which are consumed as soon as given and lead to no permanent result, tend to say: 'Appoint at once a strong and honest government which will maintain order and be friendly to Russia, and we will give you one last chance. Otherwise, if you

cannot preserve order, we can and shall. And if any more of your mullahs go preaching murder, we shall again cut them in two and march between the pieces.' The Persian Government, made impotent by utter lack of money, unable to collect its own taxes or police its own roads, conspired against on every side by ex-princes who try to curry favour with foreign governments, harassed by demands for the repayment of advances which have barely sufficed for the vital needs of the moment, undermined in their prestige by the constant intervention of foreign consuls and foreign troops, and stabbed in the back meantime by their own extremist countrymen, are tempted either to resign office and fly to Europe, or else to say to the two Powers: 'For Heaven's sake give us five or six million pounds and a free hand, and stand out of the way till we can establish ourselves in effective power.' And Sir Edward Grey . . . Well, to illustrate his invariable tone, let us take two typical telegrams. The first is No. 527 in the Blue Book Persia (1) 1913, addressed to our Consul-General, who, after almost infinite patience, had at last advised drastic action in a new emergency.

'Your telegram of the 15th December: Murder of Captain Eckford. The question of the policy we should adopt in the event of the Persian Government being unable to punish the culprits, has been engaging my attention, and I have considered carefully your recommendation that we should in that event prepare for an expedition of British troops to Southern Persia to exact reparation.

'This proposal is, in my own opinion, open to grave objections.

'Such an expedition would entail heavy expenditure, as the force dispatched would have to be large enough to make its success certain, and it would necessarily suffer considerable losses. A more important objection is, however, that we should probably be compelled, after

the termination of the operations, to occupy permanently, or at any rate for a long period, a large part of Southern Persia. The independence of Persia would be finally destroyed, and our action would be the direct cause of the partition of the country.

'I am strongly opposed to such a policy. I do not think there is sufficient ground at present for giving up hope of maintaining the independence of Persia. It would, I think, be more in accordance with our interests, as well as with the undertakings which have been given, to direct all our efforts towards establishing a strong government in Persia, and assisting the gendarmerie to perform its duties in a really efficient manner.

'The administration may, of course, not be sufficiently strong for some time to establish order among the tribes and inflict the necessary punishment on them, but if we steadily pursue our object the reckoning must come eventually, and our position will not be seriously affected by this delay.

'The dispatch of an expedition should not be urged on the Governor-General of Fars until he is satisfied that there has been sufficient time for its preparation, and that it has every chance of being successful.'

And for his general attitude towards Russia, we may take a telegram to our Ambassador at St. Petersburg (Sir G. Buchanan), sent in January 1913, when it seemed as though a 'strong and honest' ministry was at last on the point of being formed.

'Please take an opportunity of thanking Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs for the instructions which his Excellency has sent to the Russian Consul at Tabriz.' (To suppress some conspirators who professed to have Russian support.)

'You should inform him that I entirely share his view as to the grave nature of the Persian situation, which makes it necessary for the British and Russian Governments to decide at once as to their future policy. M. Sazonof

is, I am sure, no less anxious than myself that the co-operation of the two Governments should continue with a view to the maintenance of the integrity and independence of Persia. For this purpose our best course is, at this moment, to give all possible support to Ala-es-Sultaneh and to encourage Motamin-ul-mulk and men like him to join the new ministry. I hope M. Sazonof may be willing to instruct the Russian Minister at Teheran without delay to give assurances similar to those contained in my telegram to Sir W. Townley of yesterday, and generally to extend his cordial support to Ala-es-Sultaneh and Motamin-ul-mulk.

'Perhaps the Russian Government would also show their sympathy with the new Cabinet, as soon as it is definitely formed, by withdrawing a few of their troops from Persia and intimating that the remainder will be withdrawn directly order is restored. This would, I am sure, produce an excellent effect.' (No. 534.)

The two telegrams, taken almost at random from a great mass, seem to me to sum up Sir Edward Grey's policy. As a Liberal and a reasonable man, I cannot condemn it, though I admit that it has failed to achieve its full object. It has not made that wrecked ship float; it has only worked disinterestedly and unweariedly to do all the little good in its power. I can understand its being condemned by certain classes of people. Persian Nationalists may be excused for feeling that the best thing for them would have been a war with Russia in which they should be backed by Great Britain and perhaps by Turkey. But they can hardly expect the rest of the world to agree with them. I can understand its being condemned by various types of active Imperialists, wise and unwise. Some of them may think it altogether too mild and patient. Some may argue that a vigorous military occupation, or even the enlisting of a few thousand Bakhtiaris under British officers, would have restored order in all the province of Fars, increased British prestige

and rehabilitated the shaken finances of Southern Persia. Some may argue that, as Persia cannot govern herself, she offers us a fine chance for extending the Empire. Some may say that the only way to deal with Russians is to tell them what you want and fight them if they do not do it. All these classes of politician have a right to attack and denounce Sir Edward Grey for his policy in Persia, but Liberals, as far as I can see, have no right.

9. THE PERIL IN THE BACKGROUND: OUR RELATIONS WITH GERMANY

We have so far considered Sir E. Grey's policy—that is, the policy approved on the whole by both parties in three successive Parliaments, from the very Radical House of Commons of 1906 to the more evenly divided House of 1910–14—and found that on its own merits, apart from any ulterior motives, it seems a prudent, a peaceful, and a liberal-minded policy. We have taken it at its supposed weak points, and not touched upon the parts that are especially admired. We have said nothing about the Congo, nothing about the Putumayo, in both of which regions a magnificent work was performed for humanity, and performed with such a combination of tact and manifest sincerity that it led to singularly little international friction.[1]

It needed tact, and it needed conspicuous fairness, to bring and prove the most terrible charges against the administration of the 'Private Estate' of the late King of the Belgians and against people who should have been controlled by the Peruvian Government, without alienating the public opinion either of Belgium or Peru. Yet

[1] It is a pleasure to record that in the unveiling of these two great scandals the world owes much to two of Sir Edward Grey's present opponents, in the Congo to Mr. E. D. Morel, in the Putumayo to Sir Roger Casement.

Sir Edward Grey's policy achieved this. It took the leading part in the reform of those horribly oppressed regions, and was successful partly because its pressure never relaxed, largely because its honesty was above suspicion. I have not dwelt on that; nor yet on the high European reputation which our Foreign Minister won for himself by the conduct of the Balkan negotiations in 1912–13. As Count Mensdorff, the Austrian Ambassador, observed, Sir Edward Grey was not only a man who spoke the truth, he was a man who made other people know that he spoke the truth. The two wars of that year, first the war of the Balkan League against Turkey, then the war of Bulgaria against the rest of the League, passed, contrary to all expectation, without raising a general European war. The inflammable material was all handled by a conference of ambassadors sitting in London under the presidency of Sir E. Grey. Only a man known to be honest and devoted to the general interests of Europe would have been trusted by the jealous Powers to preside over their ambassadors and have the meetings in his own country. Only a man who knew himself to be honest would, I think, have ventured to put himself in the position of so presiding, exposed at every moment to sudden questions and even traps, where his hidden thoughts, if he had them, were liable to be discovered, while the other foreign ministers of Europe remained safely hidden behind their ambassadors. It would be easy to descant at length on these achievements and others. But I have preferred to take only those parts of Sir Edward Grey's policy which have been most criticized.

And so far, I have tried to consider them on their own merits. I have not urged on their behalf any great undercurrent excuse. Yet I might have done so. Sometimes an astronomer watching certain planets finds that they deviate from their proper course; then he knows that there must be present somewhere some vast unseen stellar body whose gravitation is wresting them aside.

In the case of Grey's policy we know that there was such an influence. The extraordinary thing is that it has had so comparatively little bad effect. It has made us spend huge sums to increase our fleet and our army. It has thrown us generally on the defensive. It has hindered our active power for good. But it has never, as far as I can see, actually wrested our energies into an illiberal or malignant channel.

This influence of course was Germany's *Weltpolitik*, or ' World Policy '. Europe has had to face in this last generation a peril rather like that which came from France under Napoleon or from the conquering Turks in the sixteenth century, but a peril more scientifically prepared and more self-conscious. The German Empire, flushed with the conquest of Austria in 1866 and of France in 1870–1, built up for itself the strongest army in the world. It desired—intelligibly enough—to have an army so strong that it should be as safe from the possibility of invasion as if it were surrounded by sea. Unfortunately, having acquired such an army, it could not refrain from claiming a certain predominance over those nations whose armies were of inferior strength. So far this policy, though a menace to Europe, was no concern of ours. It only became a menace to us when certain further conclusions were drawn from it. Germany was, with little doubt, if judged by the only standards to which she attached importance, the leading nation both of Europe and of the world. Her trade and industry seemed to have the most solid foundations and to advance in the swiftest strides ; her people was the best organized and educated and disciplined and at the same time the most contented and most enthusiastically loyal ; her philosophers and men of science, her historians and philologists, set the fashion to all humanity by their learning, yet bowed their heads, like little children, before the will of the State ; her royal house was the most brilliant in Europe, and the nation could still, in the twentieth century, thrill respon-

sively to the suggestion that the word of the anointed Hohenzollern was the chosen channel for the commands of God. Judged by any standard of either the world or the spirit Germany felt herself to be the First of Nations, but most of all by her own traditional and consecrated Prussian standard, the standard of Blood and Iron. Let that standard decide ! A nation in this state of mind could hardly wait for the slow processes of history or bow to the petty restrictions of formal law. Why should the best and greatest of nations not advance boldly to the throne which was hers both by right of merit and by right of conquest ? And if her way was barred on the one side by nations which were effete and decadent, and on the other by nations which were uncivilized and brutal, was the higher Power not free, was she not absolutely bound, to strike down the lower ? In the words of a famous Prussian Minister of War, who was one of the negotiators for the surrender of the French Army at Sedan, we have the full case stated :

' Do not let us forget the civilizing task which the decrees of Providence have assigned to us. Just as Prussia was destined to be the nucleus of Germany, so the regenerated Germany shall be the nucleus of a future Empire of the West. And in order that no one may be left in doubt, we here proclaim from henceforth that our continental nation has a right to the sea, not only to the North Sea but to the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. Hence we intend to absorb one after another all the provinces that neighbour on Prussia. We will successively annex Denmark, Holland, Belgium, Northern Switzerland ; then Trieste and Venice ; finally Northern France from the Sambre to the Loire. This programme we fearlessly announce. It is not the work of a madman. The Empire we intend to found will be no Utopia. We have ready to our hands the means of founding it, and no coalition in the world can stop us.'

This utterance of Bronsart von Schellendorf was not,

of course, the programme of the Government. But it was the programme of a League so numerous and powerful that it always influenced and often directed the policy of the Government. And it shows what kind of dreams hovered before the eyes of German patriots even in the days when they had no great navy; when they were, as Count Ernst zu Reventlow puts it, like a man with one leg or an eagle with one wing.

An army supreme in Europe; a power so great that no European state can move without consulting it: that was the achievement of Bismarck. But—here there is general agreement between military theorists like Bernhardi, well-informed Pan-Germans like Reventlow, and moderate and responsible Imperial Chancellors like Prince von Bülow—the position won by Bismarck was to be only a stepping-stone. Power in Europe was a means to *Weltmacht*, Power in the world. And the Kaiser, from the beginning of his reign, is said to have had the firm resolve to give Germany a fleet corresponding to her army.[1]

We need not look for the words of extremists. The policy is announced by von Bülow and by the Kaiser's own speeches. 'Sea-power is world-power.' 'The future of Germany is on the sea.' 'The trident shall pass into our hands.' Von Bülow and Reventlow repeatedly explain the practical difficulty of this policy. At present England is the strongest sea-power; and the problem for Germany is not merely to build up a fleet capable of dealing with the British fleet, but to do so under England's eyes and without England's interference. 'The fleet was to be built without our coming into conflict with England, whom we could not yet oppose at sea.'[2] There were two great dangers: England's enmity and

[1] Bernhardi, *Germany's Next War*; Graf Ernst zu Reventlow, *Deutschlands auswärtige Politik*, 1888–1913; Prince von Bülow, *Imperial Germany*.

[2] Von Bülow, *Imperial Germany*, p. 18; also the following pages.

England's friendship. 'England's unreserved and certain friendship could only have been bought at the price of those very international plans for the sake of which we should have sought British friendship. It would have been *propter vitam vivendi perdere causas*.' 'The alpha and omega of British policy has always been the attainment and maintenance of English naval supremacy.' (Naturally; since if Great Britain loses command of the sea, she dies of starvation in a few weeks; and owing to her 'consistent egoism', she does not wish this to occur.) Therefore the problem for Germany was, by long patience and concealment, to undermine Great Britain's naval supremacy without her knowing it. Then, it might be hoped, Great Britain would be wise enough to accept the new situation. If not, the German fleet could strike. The German people would heave a long sigh and cry 'At last!' The day would have come.[1]

It would be easy to multiply statements of this policy from the writings of Imperial Chancellors, of the Kaiser himself, and from Reventlow. It would be still easier to collect the sinister vapourings of various members of the German Navy League and the Pan-German League. But my object is not to make out a case against Germany; it is only to consider the disturbing effect of German ambitions upon British policy.

This ideal of *Seemacht und Weltmacht* took shape, as is well known, in the German Navy Law of 1900. This law nearly doubled the existing Navy and provided for a steady increase year by year for some considerable time ahead without further consulting of Parliament. As a matter of fact Parliament was consulted frequently, but only with the object of accelerating, not of questioning, the rate of increase. The officially avowed object of this naval policy was to give Germany so strong a fleet that 'even the strongest naval Power should not be able

[1] See Reventlow on their feelings at the time of the Kaiser's telegram to President Krüger, p. 76.

to challenge her with any confidence'. In less official language it was that, as Germany had the strongest army in the world, so she must have the strongest navy in the world. The eagle wanted both its wings.

Sir Edward Grey's general comment on the situation is worth quoting. It is so characteristically gentle. 'Now let me say this. German strength is by itself a guarantee that no other country will desire or seek a quarrel with Germany. That is one side of the shield, and one of which Germans may well be proud. But there is another side of the shield, and that is: If a nation has the biggest army in the world, and if it has a very big navy, and is going on building a still bigger navy, then it must do all in its power to prevent the natural apprehensions in the minds of others, who have no aggressive intentions themselves, lest that Power, with its army and navy, should have aggressive intentions towards them. I do not believe in these aggressive designs (of Germany). I do not wish to have my words interpreted in that sense. But I think it must be realized that other nations will be apprehensive and sensitive, and on the look-out for any indications of aggression. All we or the other neighbours of Germany desire is to live with her on equal terms.' (Sir Edward Grey, in the House of Commons, November 17, 1911.)

However much we might refuse to believe in the existence of 'aggressive intentions', there was clearly in existence a new political fact which Great Britain was bound in one way or another to meet. Three lines of policy, it seems, were possible.

1. A force-against-force policy: as Germany meant to increase her navy till it was strong enough to strike us down, our policy might be to provoke a quarrel and strike her down first. This was the policy of a 'preventive war', advocated occasionally by the more excitable ultra-imperialists in England, but essentially too immoral to be tolerated by the mass of the British

people. Reventlow observes that if the British Government had wished for a 'preventive war' in the earlier years of the century, nothing would have been easier than to find an occasion for it. (*Deutschlands auswärtige Politik*, p. 253.)

2. A policy of mere submission. I have never seen this policy advocated by any serious person, unless perhaps Mr. Brailsford could be accused of doing so in a paradoxical passage of his brilliant book *The War of Steel and Gold* (pp. 33 ff.). He tries there to argue that, even at the worst, suppose Germany completely conquered all opposition, nobody would really be a penny the worse, while at the same time he expresses his personal belief that 'there will be no more wars among the six great Powers' (p. 35). The passage was written early in 1914, and I think we may perhaps assume that the author's opinion of the comparative harmlessness of being conquered by Germany has been as much changed as his belief that there would be no more European wars. On the whole, I do not think it necessary to argue against the view that Great Britain should have said to Germany: 'You want to have the biggest fleet in the world? Well, have it, and much good may it do you! We will not compete.'

3. A policy of reasonable and pacific common sense. This was the policy actually followed. We said to Germany: 'If you have any grievance against us, tell us and we will try to remove it: but you must understand that the command of the sea is to us a matter of life and death, and we cannot afford to lose it. Our navy is a danger to nobody, certainly not to Germany; because we deliberately keep a very small army, so that it is utterly impossible for us to attack any first-class Power. But your navy appears to threaten us in a vital point.'

This policy took two forms: an attempt to get into cordial and frank relations with Germany, so as to settle any reasonable grievance which she might feel; and an

attempt to come to some agreement for a proportional reduction of armaments. The two lines overlap, but may for clearness' sake be treated separately.

Let us take first, as simplest and most definite, the question of armaments. Great Britain's line was clear. 'We wish for no aggression, no increase of the empire; we are ready for any treaties of conciliation or arbitration; but our national safety depends on the command of the sea. Therefore, if your intentions are peaceful, as we quite believe they are, let us have an understanding about armaments. We will make no attempt whatever to rival your army, and we ask you not to try to outstrip our navy. Short of outstripping it, or putting our command of the sea in danger, tell us what arrangement will suit you, and we can reduce our fleets together. And meantime we will give you any security you like that we will not attack you or enter any combination which aims at attacking you. But, we warn you, if you insist on building faster and faster, we shall build too and endeavour to keep up our full superiority. That means that we must both continue ruining ourselves on naval armaments until the race is checked either by a European war or a domestic revolution.'

Our record on the disarmament question is above reproach. In 1898 the Czar brought the matter forward and proposed an International Conference for the reduction of armaments. Mr. Goschen, as First Lord of the Admiralty, agreed to accept a reduction if other Powers would frame a scheme. By the time of the Second Hague Conference, in 1907, Sir Edward Grey being then Foreign Secretary, we had gone further. We risked taking the initial step, and announced beforehand, in July, 1906, a large reduction of our Navy, in the hope that other Powers might be induced to follow our example. We reduced our programme twenty-five per cent. in battleships, sixty per cent. in large destroyers, and thirty-eight per cent. in submarines.

This step was all the bolder since the Germans had, immediately before, amended their programme by the addition of six large cruisers. Lord Haldane went to Berlin to press further the effect of our example. He was told that Germany would not discuss the reduction of armaments, and would not attend the Hague Conference at all if that subject was to be there considered. Another attempt was made in Berlin by King Edward himself, in conjunction with Lord Hardinge. It was rejected no less summarily. Other nations, they were told, might feel the burden of armaments too much for them. Germany did not; and meant to have both her army and navy as large as she thought fit.

The British Prime Minister, Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman, still persevered. It might be that the peace-feeling in Europe would be strong enough even to influence Germany. The Social Democrats and the remains of the Liberal parties would surely respond. He wrote himself an article in the *Nation* (March 2, 1907), urging the cause of disarmament, and expressing his willingness to make further reductions in the British fleet if the other Powers would co-operate. He made this proposal officially to the seven chief naval Powers. The Russian jurist, Professor Maartens, visited the Courts of Europe with the same object. But Germany's official answer was given by the Chancellor in April, 1907: 'The German Government refused to participate in any such discussion.' The whole subject had to be ruled out of the Hague Conference.

There was a further increase of the German fleet this year. In the next King Edward again visited Berlin, and approached the subject of reduction of armaments. The Kaiser's answer was that no discussion of naval armaments with a foreign Government could be tolerated by Germany. His tone seems to have been just that of Reventlow: the proposal itself was an insult. The blood of the latter boils to recount the story how an

English midshipman once said to a German cadet, 'We have the fleet, and you have the army.' Where the insult lies is a little difficult for an outsider to see; but an insult it is, and one which, Reventlow thanks God, can never be repeated (p. 296).

It is this feeling which explains a speech of Prince von Bülow in December 1908, where he denies that definite proposals for the limitation of armaments had ever been made to the German Government. They had not been made, because, as soon as the subject was opened, Germany refused to listen and cut the speaker short. As a matter of fact, there were great suspicions of secret shipbuilding in this year and the next, and in 1909 facts which came to the knowledge of Mr. McKenna, then First Lord of the Admiralty, made him demand an unusual increase of the British programme. His fears were, as a matter of fact, not realized, though the statements of fact which he made were quite accurate. But the great strain produced both here and in Germany by these suspicions made the situation even more dangerous than before. Sir Edward Grey therefore made a very characteristic proposal. He suggested, since Germany would not agree to any limitation, that at least both countries should prove their good faith by letting one another see what they were building. He proposed that the naval attachés in London and Berlin should be allowed from time to time to see the actual stage of construction reached by the capital ships in dock. Arrangements could be made for preventing the disclosure of any details which were particularly secret, and the step would obviously allay anxiety and prevent groundless panics. The German Government refused. They did not wish, it seems, to allay the strain.

It is important to understand German feeling on this point. It is doubtless in origin a theory conjured up to justify the policy which Germany's instinctive ambition craved, the 'Calvary', in Reventlow's words, which she

had irrevocably set herself to climb. But from whatever cause it arose, it has been for many years a genuine feeling. To the German Imperialist the true ideal is to put forth the extreme of human effort in the service of the Fatherland; peace, arbitration, honest treaties, rules of war, everything that in any way limits the need of effort and slackens the tensity of the struggle, is in itself contemptible, and is only sought by nations who are decadent and slack in moral fibre. Reventlow remarks how the German-Americans lose their true *Deutschtum*. They even 'lose their comprehension of Germany' to such an extent that a deputation of them once came to Berlin to plead the cause of the Taft Arbitration Treaty! 'But that bubble is long burst!' (p. 219)

The British overtures for the reduction of armaments continued unabated down to Mr. Churchill's proposal in 1912 for a 'naval holiday'. All were refused, and the two nations were thrown back on undisguised and unmitigated competition in shipbuilding. But after 1907 the naval question begins to merge into the larger question of friendship with Germany. We will therefore go back to that subject.

Up to 1902 or 1903, as Reventlow repeatedly emphasizes, Great Britain was frequently in the position of suing for German friendship. But, as we saw above, Germany regarded such friendship as a trap (p. 78). Her aim was 'World-power by means of Sea-power'; and friendship of a sincere or permanent kind with Great Britain could only be obtained by the sacrifice of this policy. After 1903 Great Britain began gradually to realize that her difficulties with Germany were due not to any particular points in dispute. Such points as there once were had practically all been settled long before, especially in the period of 'graceful concessions' about 1890, when Lord Salisbury carried through the peaceful partition of disputed territories in Africa and gave

Germany the island of Heligoland. The present difficulties were due to some settled resolve of Germany's. We began gradually to see what that resolve was: never quite to quarrel till the Day came, yet never to come to terms; but it was long before we realized the enormous force with which it was held. Not all Germans, it was justly argued, agreed with the Kaiser and the majority of the Reichstag; and even the Kaiser might change his mind. In 1906 when the Campbell-Bannerman Government took office, it showed the spirit of its policy by its very first acts. It made a determined move at the Hague Conference towards an agreement for disarmament and pacification, and at the same time it opened confidential conversations with Germany to see in what way the two Powers could re-establish cordial relations. Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice, the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, is described as 'making entreaties to Germany'. But fortunately, 'Germany succeeded in foiling any such discussion' (Reventlow, pp. 280–5). In 1906 came Lord Haldane's visit to Berlin, to try to improve Anglo-German relations. No better move could have been devised. Lord Haldane was a man universally respected in England and known to be *persona grata* in Germany. Though he afterwards showed himself a great War Minister, he was an earnest friend of peace. The one objection urged by political opponents to his selection as negotiator was the possibility that his friendship for Germany might lead him too far. But, as a matter of fact, he was simply baffled at the outset. The great men whom he met in Berlin had other aims, and aims which were not compatible with friendship for Great Britain. In the following month a vain attempt was made to revive the negotiations by the visit of King Edward and Lord Hardinge; it was repeated in 1908, but was equally fruitless.

At one time indeed the proposals for something like friendship seemed much nearer to accomplishment, and

in this case the first move came from Germany. In 1909, after von Bülow's fall, the present Chancellor, Bethmann-Hollweg, came into power, and one of his earliest acts was an attempt to form an understanding with Great Britain. It is not clear whether he was in part sincere, but thwarted by another influence, or whether he was merely scheming to break up the Triple Entente. He suggested in general terms that there might be some understanding about the two navies, if it could be based on a general political friendship. British hopes rose high, but of course by this time the hopes were accompanied by suspicions.

Bethmann-Hollweg's naval proposal, the one side of the agreement which could be practically tested, amounted to nothing at all. He refused even to consider any reduction or any modification of the Navy Law; at most he was willing to discuss 'retardation' of shipbuilding, provided that the total number of ships already arranged for 1918 were built by that year. At a later stage in the negotiations, however, even 'retardation' was ruled out. The Kaiser informed the British Ambassador that he personally would on no account agree to any arrangement by which Germany was debarred from increasing her naval programme as she chose. Thus the naval proposal came to nothing.

The Chancellor's general proposal of co-operation centred in an engagement that, in the event of either Power being attacked by a third Power or group of Powers, the Power not attacked should remain neutral. This sounds moderate in itself; but one observes at once its utterly different character from that of the two Ententes at which Great Britain had arrived. The Ententes were based on a full and sincere discussion of all the points at issue between Britain and France or Britain and Russia, and on the friendly relation which arose out of the loyal settlement of those differences. There was a promise of diplomatic support in certain cases, and a general understanding that neither Power would do anything behind

the back of the other. But there was no mention of war, and no obligation to any particular attitude in the event of war. Where such a question subsequently arose, as in the Morocco crisis, it arose from new events in European politics : there was no military agreement in the Ententes. But German diplomacy, characteristically, puts war in the forefront. We were to promise neutrality in case Germany was ever, under any circumstances, attacked.

Of course we had no faintest intention of joining in an attack on Germany, and we offered clear undertakings to that effect. But the danger was that, by intrigue or by the interplay of alliances, Germany might manœuvre some Power into making the first formal attack. As the summer of 1914 showed, it was always easy for Germany, by declaring war on Russia, to compel France to ' attack ' her ; and indeed she did then, though in a half-hearted manner, accuse France of making the first attack. The proposed treaty would in these circumstances have bound us to be neutral. True, we might have taken the line which Italy took, and argued that the war was really an aggressive war on the part of Germany, not an attack by France, and that our treaty did not hold. But one great end would in the meantime have been attained by Germany. The confidence between France and Great Britain would have been sapped. France knew that we would not back her in any aggression, she knew that she herself contemplated no aggression. But she would have been justly suspicious if we concluded a treaty with her one great enemy, binding us to be neutral in certain contingencies. As Sir Edward Grey said to the German Ambassador, the way for the German Government to get into friendly relations with us was to improve its own relations with France ; not to make arrangements for fighting France while we stood aside. We had indeed no obligations with any Power which interfered with the formation of new ties. Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman had expressed it : ' Our stock of good feeling and international goodwill is

not exhausted by France. Let us hope that this wise policy will be extended. There is the great Empire of Russia. Then again there is Germany.' But it appeared that the German proposals in this case involved exactly what we could not accept. 'One does not make new friendships worth having by deserting old ones. New friendships by all means let us make, but not at the expense of those we have.' (Grey, Nov. 27, 1911.)

After prolonged negotiations the proposals of 1909 fell through. They achieved certain minor ends, facilitating, for instance, the ultimate co-operation of Great Britain in the amended scheme for the Bagdad Railway,[1] but in the main they left an unsatisfactory impression. In August 1910, however, the British Government returned to the charge. They agreed not to bother Germany any more about the reduction of her naval programme, and proposed an understanding on the basis of three stipulations: (1) A 'temporary retardation' of the shipbuilding;

[1] The Anatolian Railway Company had made their line as far as Konieh in Cilicia. The German Group then obtained (in 1903) a concession to make an extension, about 1,500 miles in all, from Konieh across the Taurus and on by Aleppo, the Euphrates, Mosul, the Tigris Valley to Bagdad, and thence on to Bosra at the head of the Persian Gulf. Great Britain of course objected to the presence of German influence on the Persian Gulf, more especially as the objects of the railway were fully as much political as commercial. Hence we opposed the railway scheme. The Company then, finding its capital insufficient, tried to float a loan in Paris and London. The British Government seemed inclined to favour the idea of British participation, till it was discovered that the constitution of the Railway established German control in perpetuity. In 1911, as a concession to Great Britain, the Company gave up its right to build beyond Bagdad, subject to the condition that if the railway were afterwards extended towards the Persian Gulf the Bagdad Railway Company should have as large a share in the extension as any single non-Ottoman nation. The various railway concessions in the Turkish Empire present a curious story of intrigue and corruption. Some of the lines curl round like serpents for no reason except that they are paid from the Turkish taxes at so much a kilometre.

(2) meantime no increase in the programme and no building in secret : free exchange of information about the actual progress of work in the dockyards ; (3) assurances that we had no hostile intentions towards Germany and had made no agreement with any Power which contained in it anything directed against Germany. Germany refused both (1) and (2), the Kaiser himself explaining that under no circumstances would he consent to any arrangement which bound Germany not to increase her naval programme as and when she chose. As for the third offer, Germany proposed further discussion, and the British Government at length, with much disappointment, assented to the plan of discussing a political agreement without any cessation or slackening of the naval rivalry. The proposals of the German Chancellor are described in Sir Edward Grey's speech in the House of Commons on March 13, 1911. They amounted to an arrangement ' more comprehensive, far-reaching, and intimate ' than any arrangement, short of actual alliance, that England had with any other Power. Such an arrangement was likely to cause misunderstanding in France and Russia. The British agreements with France and Russia were not based on a general political formula. They were settlements of specific questions, and the settlements had transformed relations of friction into relations of friendship. There was nothing exclusive in these friendships ; the British Government had seen with unmixed satisfaction the settlement of some disputes between France and Germany and between Russia and Germany. Why should not the same thing be attempted between Germany and England ? '

Thus Grey's policy is to reject a special and close treaty with Germany, specifically contemplating war, which might prove inconsistent with Great Britain's friendly relations with France and Russia, and would certainly leave Germany able to wage war upon those Powers with a freer hand. He pressed instead for a general settlement

of disputes, which would bring Germany into harmony with the other Powers. In other words, we would co-operate with Germany in the maintenance of peace and the existing order; we would not co-operate with her, nor promise her a free hand, in any attempt to overthrow the existing order and assert her supremacy over Europe.

This was not what Germany desired. As Reventlow puts it, Germany had already in 1905 stood at the parting of the ways. At that time Great Britain had first appealed to Germany for a reduction of armaments or a naval understanding, and, being refused, had replied by building the *Dreadnought* and establishing a naval base on the North Sea. British friendship, says Reventlow, could easily have been secured. The ways of Germany's foreign policy would have been made smooth, but she would have had to accept British naval supremacy. She preferred, with full consciousness, 'to build for her foreign politics and diplomacy a Calvary which must, *nolens volens*, be climbed' (p. 251).

In 1912 Lord Haldane again visited Berlin and attempted to negotiate the terms of friendship. He pleaded the cause of naval retrenchment. What was the use of the two Powers entering into a solemn agreement of amity, if both were immediately to increase their battle-fleets as a measure of precaution against their new friends? The pleading was useless. As a matter of fact Germany chose the moment of Lord Haldane's visit to announce very large increases in both Navy and Army.

There remained the possibility of a political agreement, apart from any reduction of the navies. But Germany's terms by now were more explicit and sweeping. She wanted an unconditional pledge that Great Britain would maintain neutrality in the event of Germany being engaged in war. She wanted to climb her Hill of Skulls more untrammelled; to be able to make war, it may be, on France or Russia, or to annex Belgium or Holland or Denmark, with the security that Great Britain was bought

off beforehand. One is surprised that a responsible Minister could have expected us to accept such a proposal. He may have thought that our naval burden was even more crushing to us than it really was, and that we would abandon everything, including our honour and our future safety, for the sake of a breathing space and Germany's temporary friendship. And in any case one is reminded of a saying of Bismarck's, quoted by von Bülow: 'If Mr. X makes you a proposal which is obviously advantageous to him and ruinous to you, it by no means follows that Mr. X is a fool. It only follows that you will be one if you accept.'

We would do nothing to make Germany's path towards war easier. But we continued to the last moment to make proposals for extending our friendly relations to the Powers not in the Entente. All through the Balkan crisis Grey did what he could to break down the lines of division between the two great diplomatic groups, the Entente and the Alliance. Our relations with Italy were cordial; our relations with Austria were good. We worked loyally with Germany. We encouraged special conversations between Russia and Austria, the more so because such conversations made a bridge between the Entente and the Alliance. 'We have the strongest desire to see those who are our friends on good terms with other Powers: we regard it without jealousy and with satisfaction' (Grey, March 13, 1911). 'Whatever separate diplomatic groups there are, I do not think that ought to prevent frankness and exchange of views when questions of mutual interest arise. And if that takes place, separate diplomatic groups need not necessarily be in opposing diplomatic camps' (Grey, July 10, 1912).

10. SIR EDWARD GREY AS A STATESMAN

That was Sir Edward Grey's hope, and it has proved false. I see divers high-spirited traffickers in other people's blood exulting in their newspapers in the boast that they never wished for the welfare of any one outside England, never for a moment believed the word of any German, and never had the weakness to work or hope for European peace. Against such people I will not defend Sir Edward Grey. I doubt if he would value their approval.

I see also that what was regarded as one of the greatest triumphs of his policy was not entirely due to him. It is supposed that, all through the several Balkan crises, from 1911 to 1913, it was his guidance of the negotiations which saved Europe from the imminent danger of the war. One suspects now, somewhat bitterly, that perhaps there was a greater contributing cause. The dangerous elements now prevailing among the Central Powers perhaps wished to put off the war a little later, so they allowed him to preserve the peace. We know from Signor Giolitti [1] that already on August 9, 1913, long before the murder at Serajevo, Austria had invited Italy to support her in taking military action against Serbia and so precipitating the Great War, and Italy had refused. It is curious to think that some of the courtly praises lavished on Grey, as the preserver of the peace of Europe, by divers German and Austrian dignitaries, were actually uttered after this scheme had been proposed. The mischief-makers allowed Sir Edward Grey to keep the peace as long as it suited them. When their time came they insisted on having their war, and he was powerless to prevent them. After all it takes only one to make a quarrel ; it needs two to preserve the peace.

[1] Giolitti in the Italian Chamber, December 5, 1914 : *Collected Documents*, p. 401.

Sir Edward Grey did not succeed in preserving peace. He failed in the greatest of all his aims, as, in those circumstances, any human being was bound to fail. He succeeded only in the two next greatest. By his honesty he had convinced the overwhelming mass of neutral opinion that our cause was just and the war none of our making ; by his prudence and loyal dealing he had made sure that, when the storm burst, the cause of peace and public right was upheld by three of the strongest Powers of the world in confident alliance. A just cause, the sympathies of the world, and powerful allies : if war must come, it is something to possess these.

In reading through considerable masses of state papers and speeches and similar documents, one sees emerging a fairly clear conception of the character of this man and this policy which have steered Great Britain for nine years through the midst of such deadly seas. Sir Edward Grey, like his chief, is sometimes said to be a man of ' negative character '. The charge is true enough if a character be negative in which there is no self-seeking, no vanity, no display or self-advertisement. In that sense he is negative. His speeches are rare and not eloquent. I doubt if there was ever a great Foreign Minister who was so little of a wit. Bismarck was a wit of the first water. Talleyrand was the prince of all wits. Lord Salisbury was full of daring epigram. Lord Palmerston had his bold taunts and jests. Lord Lansdowne, Lord Granville, Lord Rosebery, were famous for the courtly polish of their phrases. But in all Grey's speeches there is hardly to be found a single jest, a single purple patch, a single brilliant indiscretion. As speeches they are almost dull. Yet he has been listened to with an interest, and followed with a trust, that can have been the lot of very few Foreign Ministers. The fact is that British foreign policy during the last twelve years has been a very serious business. Men hung upon Grey's words because they wanted to know exactly where our foreign policy stood, and men trusted him

because they felt that he cared sincerely and ceaselessly for the two things for which we all cared. Those two things are British honour and British interests. The average Liberal-minded Englishman knew that those words bore to Grey the same meaning as to himself: that national honour meant real honour and not vainglory; national interests meant the real interests of the whole nation and not the gains of adventure or intrigue.

The name of diplomat has just now an evil savour. Unjustly, I think: for this war which is draining our lifeblood was certainly not due to anything so superficial as the faults of diplomats. But it seems strange, to one who has studied the record, that the critics who specially object to diplomats should concentrate their disapproval upon Grey. He seems so unlike a diplomat. The traditional qualities of the diplomat, the polished surface, the social brilliance, the narrow ruthless outlook, the skill in moving gracefully among traps and mines, the smiling falsehoods and *coups* of unscrupulous cleverness—all that we associate with Metternich or Talleyrand or Bismarck, seem so utterly opposite to the characteristics of this quiet, able, unpretending Englishman of country tastes, simple in word and thought, a little tongue-tied and shy, learned in birds and good at fishing, and kindling quickly to warm sympathy in all questions of labour.

Yet to certain circles in England Grey is the typical figure not only of diplomacy, but of that specially odious form of it called 'secret diplomacy'. It is curious how a telling phrase will flash through a whole country, untested and unquestioned. The war took us by surprise. We were amazed, horrified, we could not understand, and we wanted somebody or something to blame. The Germans . . . it was easy enough to blame them. But what of our own Ministers? What were they paid for, what were they trusted for, if they steered us into utter disaster like this? Why had we never expected

what was coming? It was 'secret diplomacy'; and there must never again be any 'secret diplomacy'.

Now this is not the place to discuss at length how far it may be possible, in the consideration of delicate international affairs, where there is often a good deal of gunpowder lying about and waiting for a spark, to abolish altogether the element of confidential conversation between responsible persons. I confess that the full ideal seems to me utterly impracticable. There must be the possibility of confidential discussions which both parties promise not to repeat; the best we can hope for is far short of the absolute abolition of secrecy.

We can perhaps aim at two things: (1) We may press the claim that, in normal circumstances, the House of Commons, and thereby the public, should have more knowledge and more control over Foreign Politics than has sometimes been the case. Such knowledge and control would not have had the slightest effect in averting or delaying the present war; but a general interest and understanding of Foreign Affairs would doubtless produce a healthier tone in the nation generally and is certainly part of the natural equipment of an intelligent democracy. (2) We might also demand, in normal circumstances, as a perfectly fixed rule, that no binding engagement to a foreign Power should ever be made without the assent of the House of Commons.

Let us examine Sir Edward Grey's record by these two tests. If we take the second rule first, we shall find that it is one which he has on every occasion expressly asserted and followed. 'I have assured the House—and the Prime Minister has assured the House—more than once, that if any crisis such as this arose we should come before the House of Commons and be able to say to the House that it was free to decide what the British attitude should be; we would have no secret engagement which we should spring upon the House; we would not tell the House that, because we had entered

into that engagement, there was an obligation of honour upon the country.' Those are Grey's words on August 3, 1914; and the above pages will show the dogged determination with which, under all kinds of pressure, he insisted on keeping his hands always free and never compromising the country which he served. That the course of events in themselves sometimes grew into a kind of obligation is a fact which no Foreign Minister can avert.

So much for the second demand; what of the first? Let me quote the words of an able and learned Irish Nationalist who has been particularly prominent in pressing for greater opportunities for the discussion and control of Foreign Affairs by the House of Commons. Mr. Swift MacNeill on May 29, 1911, said: 'The success of the present Foreign Secretary (Sir Edward Grey) has been very great. The secret of that success has been that he has taken the House of Commons into his confidence on Foreign Affairs to a greater extent than has any other gentleman in his position. . . . To one who has served under many Foreign Secretaries it is quite refreshing to see the Foreign Secretary, when he is there, on the Treasury Bench. My recollection of the first fifteen years of my parliamentary life is that foreign affairs were scrupulously hidden from the House of Commons; that we were kept deliberately in the dark about them. When the Prime Minister also held the office of Foreign Minister there was an Under-Secretary on the Treasury Bench . . . who had commands from him not to answer supplementary questions in regard to Foreign Policy. . . . Now all that is changed. We have as Foreign Secretary one of ourselves, a Member of the House of Commons and a thorough House of Commons man, ready, so far as he can, to answer all questions, and to give us, as far as he can, proper assurances as to how matters stand.'

I do not pretend that Mr. Swift MacNeill's words are conclusive; but they amount to a pretty strong testimonial,

coming from one whose main object in addressing the House was to urge the need for greater publicity and for some regular system by which Foreign Affairs should be communicated to the House.

Yet one can see how it arose, this queer delusion which associates Sir Edward Grey with some special degree of secrecy in diplomacy rather than with the exact opposite. People remember vaguely the old days when Foreign Politics formed the great arena of party struggles ; when Palmerston stood at bay for four hours at a stretch defending his dashing jingoism against Bright and Cobden; when the whole country rang with Gladstone's fury at Lord Beaconsfield's alleged condonation of the Bulgarian atrocities and the Opposition, in Lord Hartington's words, ' pegged away night after night ' till the Conservative Government fell. When the situation is such that Opposition and Government are of one mind, there is naturally less public excitement and less debate. And there is another fact about the foreign situation in recent years which has had an even greater influence. In Palmerston's days, in Gladstone's days, most of the issues at stake, though grave and thrilling, were not absolutely issues of life and death for Great Britain. (The Indian Mutiny perhaps was, and about that there was little contemporary discussion.) When a common peril reaches certain dimensions, people cease to quarrel and argue ; they hold together and are silent. And the peril which has overhung our foreign relations for the last twelve years was a peril so awful that wise men were mostly willing to measure their words and avoid the possibility of fanning any dangerous smoke into flame. No one can read the debates of the last few years on Foreign Politics in the House of Commons without feeling that the House was under some heavy shadow and members' tongues not moving freely.

This shadow, this overhanging peril, must never be forgotten in any judgement which we pass on Sir Edward

Grey's conduct of our foreign affairs. There is a phrase of ancient medicine which we can well apply to it: it is 'sound in the nobler parts'. So much is, to my judgement, beyond question. If here and there on some point of detail he has not driven as clever a bargain as he might; if he has not stood up to our friends Russia and France as defiantly as some of his less responsible critics would have done; even if, here and there, he has not pressed fearlessly forward in support of some weak nation to which British liberal sympathies went naturally forth; if under his guidance, with all our enormous naval expenditure and prestige, Great Britain has sometimes seemed to have little spare strength for the running of avoidable risks or the championing of disinterested causes; let those criticize him who can still say that he over-rated our danger. The rest of us will only be grateful for ever to one who through all these years of crisis acted justly and sought no aggrandizement, who kept faith with his friends and worked for a good understanding with his enemies, who never spoke a rash word to bring the peril nearer, and never neglected a precaution to meet it when it should come.

PRINTED IN ENGLAND
AT THE OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

T5-CSB-669